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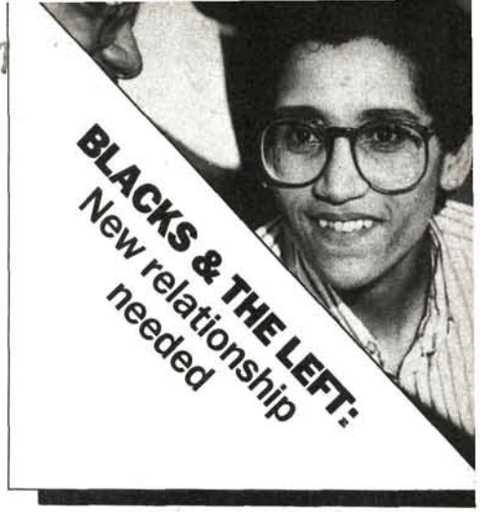
NEW STATESMAN

- Is disarmament possible? • Hitchens on Reagan
- Sugar women of Bombay • Radio renaissance
- The strain in Spain • Comics • Pop



BLACKS & THE LEFT: New relationship needed

SECRET SOCIETY

DUNCAN CAMPBELL's Report on Britain behind closed doors. Part One: Personal data for sale.

Cover illustration: Simon Stern

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NEW STATESMAN

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NEXT WEEK

Duncan Campbell's *Secret Society* series continues with an investigation of the secret laws which would be used in a national emergency — but which the government won't talk about; plus in praise of comprehensive schooling

Third time worse

AMONG THE most effective elements in the government's politics has been the presentation of its successes. Chief among the images these have thrown up is the individual or family who are doing well — buying their own home (possibly from the council); starting their own business; investing in their own shares — and all for the first time. The impression is created of a nation grasping for success, for a property stake which raises them above their former status and which breaks their old allegiances. These are the new men and women: the Thatcherites.

They exist, of course. But their promotion, in both senses of the word, disguises two other areas of human life. First, their material success is wholly dwarfed by that of the already wealthy, whose real incomes have risen both absolutely and relatively at a constant and rapid rate throughout the Thatcher governments. Second, both the 'old' and the 'new' rich rest on a large hinterland of immiseration, which is unemployment and poverty. That is the side of national life which is turned away from the light.

These are the people who have been the victims of the Thatcher experiment, and who will continue to be. It is with them in mind that we should study the presentation by the Labour Party next week of 'The Real Conservative Manifesto' — a forecast of what a third-term Tory government would so, as against the bland phrases which will lard its manifesto.

Labour has combed ministerial speeches and comments to come up with a convincing list of policies or policy options which such a government would almost certainly at least consider seriously, and in many cases implement. These include the further privatisations of British Coal, British Steel, British Rail and the water boards. Local government would be further denuded of its functions, including much of education (the privately-funded, and so far unsuccessful, City Technology Colleges are a pointer here) and perhaps much of housing, through urban corporations of the kind already operating in London's Docklands. Health care would see the contracting out of National Health Service patients to the burgeoning private health sector, further boosted by tax concessions to private medical insurance schemes, while private patients would continue to receive the hidden subsidy of the NHS infrastructure.

The poor would probably get poorer, at least relatively: taxation would be skewed towards indirect taxes, especially VAT (thus pressing hardest on the least well off), while unemployment and child benefits would be threatened with cutting. As Gordon Brown MP pointed out earlier this week, the 'Workfare' programme — the US scheme under which unemployment benefit is made conditional on the acceptance of work of any kind — would be introduced, as would further encouragements to 'worker mobility' — like lowering the pay in the regions worst hit by unemployment (on the theory, presumably that those already suffering can take a bit more without noticing it).

All of the above is, of course, Labour propaganda and not all of it will come to pass. Further, not all of it could be avoided even if the Tories *lost* the election: the hard times ahead when the oil flow declines cannot be waved away by anyone, especially when any future government will face the inexorable demographic truth of a steadily ageing population. We should not blame any party for being radical in its prescriptions and policies in face of such prospects.

But radicalism is of no merit in itself. The radicalism for which this government has been praised is one which has seen it consistently reward the rich and penalise the poor: the largest single element in the hidden manifesto will be an extension of this.

A third term of this sort of government with that sort of manifesto will be bad not so much for the specific policies but for the effect of the sum of them. For — to paraphrase the Prime Minister of eight years ago quoting St Francis of Assisi — where we have a fragmented and increasingly internally hostile society, we need policies and a governing philosophy which again attempts to re-establish community. Where we have at least implicit encouragement given to spivish or downright illegal behaviour in pursuit of a fast profit, we need a governing style and philosophy which again gives priority to probity in public life and to public service. Where we have the discord of a raucous individualism in which the individuals who can best express themselves are those whose freedom is measured in noughts on their salary cheques, we need a concept and a practice of liberty which is realised through egalitarian measures and a concern for the low paid which is institutionalised and progressive.

For the past eight years, the government's policies have been buoyed up by the oil revenues, which have financed the dispossessed. It is running out of that luck. A future Conservative government pursuing the kind of policies the last two have pursued will have to rely more and more on authoritarian measures to preserve the social order it wishes to establish. Its defeat will not of itself consign such a future to the dustbin — but it is an indispensable first step. □

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DIARY

The Carolinas, USA

This was not how I'd expected to enter the United States for the first time. I had missed out on the standard American tour while a student, but I'd heard about the queues and hassles that face even tourists trying to enter the land of opportunity. Not, it appears, if you arrive by private jet.

An American multinational — let's call it High Tech Inc — was paying god knows how much to ferry half a dozen European journalists around its operations. Minutes after the company jet taxied to a halt in a small airfield in Carolina, a US immigration official clambered on board to welcome us. 'Are you bringing any agricultural produce into the United States?' he asked. No, we all said, eyeing the huge bowl of fruit which High Tech had laid on for us. 'Fine. Enjoy your stay.'

The limos were pulling up next to the wings. We had to walk only a few feet to sink into their red upholstery, with inbuilt bar and colour TV. This was my first, and no doubt my last, glimpse of how the American super-rich live.

○

Next day, we tour a High Tech factory which is more than three times the size of anything Britain has to offer in the same industry. The journos are taken aback by the guide's opening statement: 'We're a completely non-union factory. It's one of the traditions of the Carolinas.' In Britain, even under Thatcher, electronics factories prefer not to shout about their success in keeping unions out.

The factory walls are decorated with *Readers' Digest*-type homilies designed to bathe the routine assembly work in a heroic glow. 'The difference between the extraordinary and the ordinary is just that little extra.' The notices are all pinned out of arm's, and hence graffiti's way — perhaps a sign that the human spirit lives even in Carolina. In the labs, the workers are shrouded in suits of white nylon, giving them the air of futuristic bee-keepers. 'No eating. No drinking. No smoking,' warn the signs.

○

Klaus quickly becomes our spiritual leader. He asks all the right questions and as he has lost his luggage in Frankfurt airport, he has to confront High Tech's dark-suited executives in denims. His anti-Americanism begins to infect the group, as we try to bite the hand that is feeding us.

In London, I'd been told to ask every American I met what they thought of their government's policy in Angola by Jenny, who knows about such things. My quest becomes more forlorn as I get deeper into middle America. *USA Today*, the nearest the States has to a national newspaper, has about two paragraphs of foreign news. 'Where do you come from?' a driver asks Klaus in Alabama. Germany. 'Where's that?'

○

The highlight of our stay in Alabama, besides a night of bluegrass music, was a lecture by the man with the task of instilling High Tech culture into the company's top executives. This cultural centre has a colour scheme — light blue — which was carefully selected to concentrate the minds of the bosses as they are put through a two-week, 14-hour day course in value-shaping. 'Positive brainwashing', was how our man proudly described what he did.

He was annoyed by the fact that High Tech executives arrived at the centre with different approaches to their jobs. 'My first response is to create tension between them so they realise just how different they are.' 'Do you encourage them to have fist fights?' asks Klaus. 'No, but you could say that it's a measure of our failure that none have broken out.'

○

Our junket draws to a close in Phoenix, where High Tech gives us tickets to a Henry Mancini concert as a special treat. Henry has taken the local orchestra, a perfectly decent band of musicians who deserved better, and added drums, electric guitars and lots of brass. I decide to make an extended visit to the rest room after the first number, but Henry follows me through speakers fixed above the urinals. So I have no option but to flee the building till Henry is done.

Phoenix's new town square is like the space colonies which featured in comics when I was a child. At one end is the concert hall, all glass and chandeliers, at the other a huge hotel, with a lift running up the outside of the building to a revolving restaurant 15 storeys above the desert landscape. But as soon as you wander away from this showpiece shabby shops and derelict buildings take over. The only people braving the streets are blacks in tatty clothes.

I return in time to find the audience giving Henry a standing ovation. All except the European journos who remain slumped in their seats — except, that is, Klaus who has excused himself because he has no clothes.

○

To ease my return, I stop off in Baltimore for the weekend with Jan and Rachel. Jan, who is director of a food-for-the-poor project in Baltimore, is puzzled by what he's read of our loony left. I try to explain that there's lots of frustration at the state of our inner cities — a bit like Baltimore really, where the number of soup kitchens has grown from three to over 30 under Reagan. 'But is your far left doing anything to improve things?' Jan asks. Pass.

Jan has just been given a cheque for $7,480 from Diet Pepsi, who had agreed to pay over one cent for every pound in weight lost by the citizens of Baltimore over six weeks. The Baltimore burghers shed 748,000 lbs to help the poor. Redistributive politics with a vengeance.

○

New York postscript: with a half day to kill, I drop in on Wendy, a gynaecologist working for the New York public health department. She's leaving for a conference the next day in Carolina. 'They have among the worst pre- and post-natal problems in the country. As soon as women get pregnant there, they're sacked. You see, they have no unions.'

Paul Tait

ROGER WODDIS

The Day Peace Broke Out

The day peace broke out there was a terrific panic,
Far worse than anything that happened on the *Titanic*.
Long before you were born we lived under a threat:
The Russians were going to march in (they're the ones who were
always saying, '*Nyet*')
And rape nuns and hang supporters of private enterprise in our
public parks,
And ban Enid Blyton and make everyone read Karl Marx.
Then along came Mikhail Gorbachev, this Russian chap
Who said, 'Let's drop all this crap
About deterrents that are supposed to protect us all,
Or the insects will be talking about the late human race, and
there'll be no early call.'

Well, you can imagine how that put everyone into a tizzy,
And they whispered among themselves, 'He's not being serious — is he?'
Especially the arms lobby and the *Newsnight* team and the Institute
for Studying Frightfully Important Affairs,
Who filled their pants when anyone mentioned bears,
And our own Sir Geoffrey, who looked so wise and went mad staring at
the stars,
Said, 'They'll still have a superiority in samovars.'
Anyhow, we switched off the early warnings and got rid of the
honking geese.
Go to sleep now, children, and dream of peace.

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Goulash diplomacy

Budapest

'EVERYDAY relations with Israel are so good, it's as if we had diplomatic ties,' Jozsef Balaczs, deputy director of the Hungarian Institute of International Relations, said proudly.

Twenty years after Eastern Europe's break with Israel sparked by the Six-Day War, Soviet diplomats started to admit their mistake; with no formal links between the USSR and Israel the Soviets have no place at the Middle East peace table. Eastern Europe watchers react excitedly to every new hint of a breakthrough, while protective diplomats insist with a deadpan expression that nothing is happening at all. But something *is* happening, as confirmed by the latest flurry over a possible exchange of visits between Tel Aviv and Moscow, and by the growing number of Soviet Jewish emigrés arriving in Vienna.

Hungary is often mentioned as the country most likely to follow Poland in opening an Israeli interest office. But enthusiastic comments by visiting Hungarian delegations about such a mission, the lowest level of diplomatic contact possible, are always followed by flat government denials. In the meantime, the warm glow cast over 'everyday relations' is yielding a full harvest. This year's programme of Hungarian cultural visits to Israel is full of star names. Jeno Rande, secretary-general of the World Federation of Hungarians and a former ambassador to Vienna, visited Jerusalem last month; a general exchange programme is expected to start soon and there are concrete plans to open a trade mission, although its form or timing is still very much in the air.

Hungary has a very particular relationship to Israel, where over 200,000 citizens are of Hungarian origin. The important role of Hungarians Jews in its history, and their peculiarly tragic end after the German occupation in 1944, makes the question of relations with Israel one which touches Hungarians deeply.

The Hungarians are at pains to define an independent approach, to accentuate their role as facilitator between East and West. 'The conflict cannot be settled in one day, it needs the development of confidence and assurances,' explained Balaczs. 'Hungarian diplomacy, with its small means and tools, is aiming to achieve just this.' In an interview in *Magyar Hirlap* earlier this year Gyorke Jozseffel, foreign affairs spokesman of the Communist Party Central Committee, reiterated their general aim: 'to strengthen relations, widen mutually advantageous contact'. For a further development of relations, Israel is still expected to take 'decisive steps'.

The Hungarian leadership seems to be divided over what constitutes such a 'decisive step', however. The 'soft' line was expressed by Jozseffel, who in his interview asked Israel to 'modify its aggressive foreign policy' of confrontation toward Arab countries, without specifying precise modifications. The 'hard' line is summed up by Istvan Fodor, a senior research fellow at the Institute of International Relations and the former Hungarian charge d'affaires in Egypt: 'Hungary has a principled stand . . . its demands are the same as Arab demands; Israel should withdraw from all the occupied territories. Article 242 (of the UN resolution) refers to "the" occupied territories; that means not one inch should be kept.'

Given that a number of Arab groups, including many PLO supporters on the West Bank, have long left behind the unyielding definite article cited by Mr Fodor, this principled stand is either a screen of privacy for the real changes taking place, or a reflection of a rather more practical power struggle inside the Eastern bloc.

Susan Greenberg

Europeans — or not?

MEMBERSHIP of the EEC is important to Turkey. Prime Minister Ozal's government, which lodged an official application last week, sees membership as a natural progression in the process of westernisation begun by Kemal Ataturk in the 1920s. In the short term Ozal is unlikely to be successful — Greek opposition should ensure that. This may not matter to the Ankara government. The application is more of a declaration to both Turks and foreigners of the direction in which the country is heading.

Turkey still provides the generally uninterested western press with good examples of undemocratic actions. Elections *were* held in 1983, but many political groups remain banned following the military coup nearly seven years ago. This month, the president of the Turkish Peace Association, Mehmut Dikerdem, awaits the end

The Future of The County Hall

The London Residuary Body recently put a number of planning applications to Lambeth Council — the local planning authority for The County Hall.

These applications were to *change the use* of The County Hall buildings, the home of London government since 1922, to:-

* general office use *or*
* a hotel in the main building *or*
* residential in the main building *or*
* a combination of these 3 uses

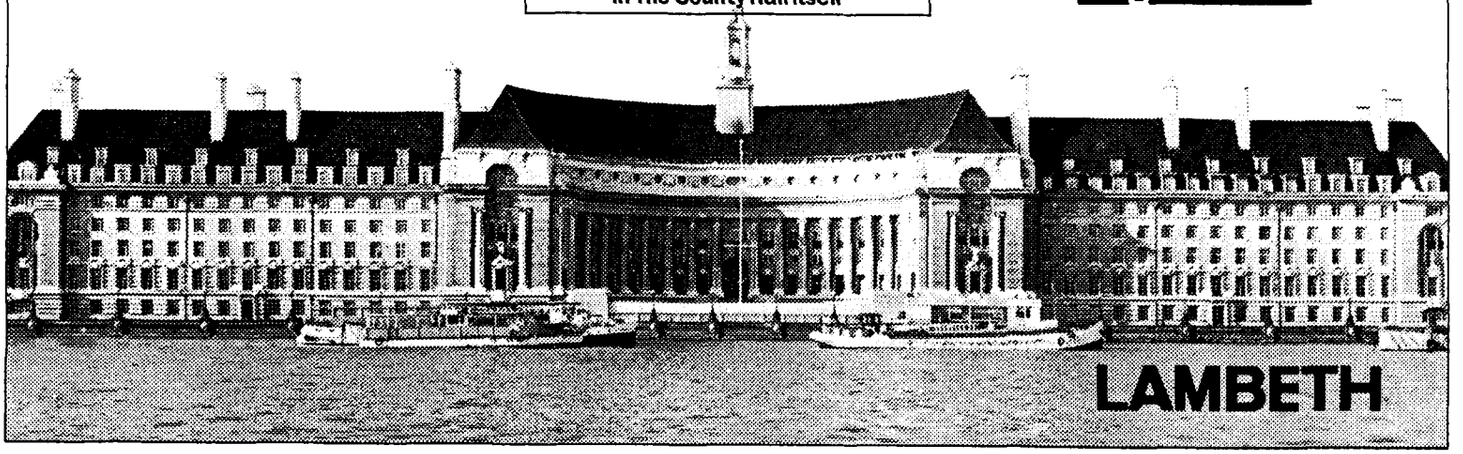
Lambeth Council, the Inner London Education Authority, the Association of London Authorities, the London Fire & Civil Defence Authority, the London Waste Regulation Authority and many other organisations and individuals are opposing these applications because they want the building to remain in public local government use.

The Department of the Environment is to hold a *PUBLIC INQUIRY* into the future of The County Hall starting on Tuesday 28th April 1987 at 10 am, in The County Hall itself

If you care about the future of The County Hall, you can appear at the inquiry or submit written representations, to do so contact the Department of the Environment, Greater London Region Office, Room 25/4, Millbank Tower, 21/24 Millbank, London SW1.

To find out more, ring Lambeth Council on 01-674 9844 extension 392.

Your opinion is important



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of his trial. His conviction will confirm the illegality of TPA. In December, a mass trial of the banned trade union DISK found 264 members guilty. The Turkish authorities have curtailed the worst excesses of the post-1980 period, but the 1982 constitution drastically restricts freedom of speech and association. Even a *consideration* of Turkey's application for EEC membership will provide some legitimacy to the constitution.

Western governments remain ambivalent. On the one hand Turkey's accession would stabilise a regime favourable towards foreign investment and an important member of NATO. On the other, it will complicate community decision-making, not least because of the continuing tense relations between Turkey and Greece.

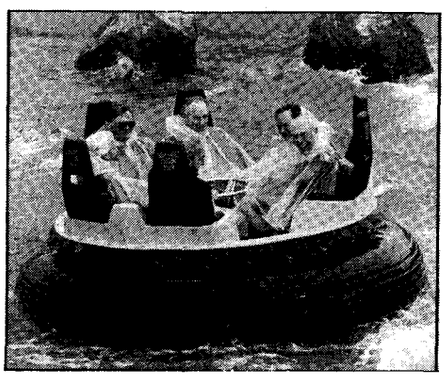
Debate inside Turkey about the wisdom of the application remained muted last week. Istanbul's progressive weekly *Yehi Gundem* boldly proclaimed 'We are not Europeans': but in Parliament, membership is opposed only by the small fundamentalist right. Social democrats try as hard as Ozal to promote Turkey's democratic, or potentially democratic, credentials, hoping that the EEC will force some liberalisation of the regime. Business interests mainly support membership in the belief that Turkey's fragile manufacturing industry will be able to restructure itself during the application process.

One of the biggest problems remains the poverty of mutual understanding. The Ankara government is frustrated by the liberal demands made upon it, and there is still little understanding of the practical implications of EEC membership.

Tom Quick

If the caption fits

No 14



Beam him up, someone. It's Captain Thatcher (right) shooting the rapids in what looks like a baby floating saucer sent out from the star ship *Enterprise* and escaped from *Star Trek IV*. Captions, think bubbles or snatches of chat to reach the star ship *Perseverance* (38 Kingsland Road, etc.) by 5 May for a £10 book token in the issue of 8 May.

No 12: Winner

Glenys: '. . . and then we won the general election.' (*Barrie Neal, Barking.*)

A new answer

Buenos Aires

LAST WEEK in Argentina saw much more than a demonstration against the military. It was a demonstration for democracy. Last Thursday night 200,000 people — left and right, young and old — were united in the most extraordinary statement of popular democratic values ever witnessed in that country.

The immediate cause of the military rebellion in Cordoba and Camp de Mayo was what has become known as the *punto finale* or 'full stop' law. Introduced last December, it provided that all outstanding charges against the military had to be brought within 60 days — a concession in part to the military and a spur to judicial investigation of human rights offences, which for three years had gotten bogged down in procedure.

More broadly, the aim was to end the trauma of the repression and to consolidate the democratic advances of the past five years. But, until last Thursday at least, it looked as though *pnto finale* had backfired. The people — especially the middle-classes whose children had disappeared in the clandestine detention centres — were not prepared to forget so soon and certainly not before many more of the murderers and torturers of the dictatorship had been brought to justice. But then, the investigating judges moved much more quickly than the government had predicted. By the end of February, 500 officers were charged.

Anger and resentment surfaced rapidly within the military, especially among more junior officers such as Barriero — who led the Cordoba rebellion and is widely believed to be personally responsible for torture and murder in the notorious La Perla concentration camp. They maintain that they were 'merely following orders' and that had they not prosecuted the 'dirty war' against the left, Alfonsin's democracy could never survive.

Indeed, only on Wednesday, Vice Admiral Maximo Rivero Kelly said: 'We military are proud of many heroic acts carried out in the fight against subversion.' But, he added, 'we understand we must start seeking something new.'

In this context the mass demonstrations outside Congress last week amounted to a fundamentally new fact in Argentinian politics. As Robert Cox, former editor of the *Buenos Aires Herald*, told me: 'Yes, the military began by rebelling in the classic way but the answer they got was not the classic answer. In the past, all the civilians would have bought out the supermarkets and locked their doors. This time the army will have to go back and think very carefully — they have absolutely no support whatsoever.'

Richard Kinsey

NEWSTATESPERSON

Re-making Cecil

THE POSITION of the right Honourable Cecil Parkinson in the Conservatives' election 'A' team will be an indication of the Prime Minister's power. If he is — as his many supporters in the press now claim — to be part of the half dozen who will make the rounds of the television studios, then Mrs Thatcher's instincts will have won out against those of her closest advisors, including John Wakeham, the powerful chief whip and Viscount Whitelaw, the deputy prime minister.

They don't want him back for the obvious reason: that his very appearance would distract from the message; and that a still vengeful Sara Keays, forever deprived of a Tory seat herself, will yet again summon reporters to her for another wounding revelation, or simply more photographs of bringing up baby Flora. Cecil, they and probably most others believe, will have to work his passage back into the councils of power he so misses.

Working his passage means the breaded chicken leg circuit at full tilt: addresses to the faithful up and down the country, with perhaps a few TV slots — but nothing too high profile. It's a trail now being beaten by fellow peccadillist Jeffrey Archer, and by fellow pin-up Michael Heseltine (whose PPS he was from 1972-74). If he does well (that is, is not written about too embarassingly) and a large Tory majority results, he may well be back in the cabinet.

He is that modern epic figure: the self-made accountant. His railway-plater father Sidney was a Labour man, as was Cecil in the late 1940s. That left him at Cambridge, and in 1959 he was in the Conservative Party. By the age of 35, he was the youngest-ever chairman of Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association: his deputy was — Norman Tebbit. The two men were and still are close friends, recognising mutual meritocracy and ambition Tebbit still tells the story of how they attracted crowds in Hemel shopping centre by each taking turns at heckling the other on a soap box.

But he did not develop the Tebbit talent for heckling for the jugular — not publicly, at least. Parkinson's skills, especially as chairman of the Conservative Party from 1981-1983, were formidable and two-fold. First, as a skilful, patient and endlessly smooth exponent of Tory policies and philosophy in television studios; and second, as a tactical tyro who saw more clearly than most how to project the best and most powerful image of his leader and his party.

He has, say senior Tories, been sorely missed: Norman Tebbit's strengths cannot match Parkinson's in image creation, and the present party chairman can be unpredictable where Cecil was careful, irascible where Cecil was bland and has never quite had the closeness of relationship with the Prime Minister which was Cecil's great strength. Unlike Tebbit, too, he has not played up his own origins (humbler than Tebbit's): instead, he appears the very epitome of the Tory gentleman in manner and speech (though he is a good deal too well dressed). The ace image-maker has remade himself first: he may, given a fair wind, be remade yet again. ●

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MARY ANN SIEGHART

A deep division but a pointless row

MAYBE IT's because I'm a Londoner — and young, female and liberally-minded — that I can't quite see what all the fuss is about. Perhaps if I were Welsh, male and middle-aged, I would. But to me it seems clear that black people, like women or low-paid workers, get a raw deal in Britain, that their only hope of changing that is to join the political process, and that the Labour Party — their natural home — is being shamefully slow in giving them a leg-up.

Labour, after all, was formed to represent the interests of exploited workers, and has gradually come to realise that women need their own voice too. Now that it has accepted that women, because of long years of discrimination, have a special right to ensure that the Labour Party listens to them, why should it deny the same opportunity to blacks?

The arguments for separate sections are the same: women and black people can feel intimidated if they are outnumbered by the men or whites; within the sections, members can discuss problems particular to them, and then explain them to the rest of the party; and not least, the sections are a symbol to the black or female population that the Labour Party wants to address itself to those problems.

Of course people will complain that Black Sections are separatist; nobody likes being excluded from a group because of an attribute that he or she can't help. Many men feel uncomfortable about women's groups, just as women have long resented men's clubs. And of course it is harder to define 'black' than to define 'woman'. But it's not impossible.

Watching Neil Kinnock's side of the party come to blows with the likes of Sharon Atkin, it is easy to assume that the row is between left and right. But that is too simple. The divide within the party seems more to be between different generations, and between Londoners and people from outside the capital. Labour supporters who are young enough to have been born into a multi-racial community and who live in places like London, with a high ethnic minority population, tend to mind most about equal opportunities. Those who were brought up in a Britain that was mainly white, or who live in a part of the country with a low black or Asian population, often fail to understand the importance of the problem. They tend to dismiss differences of sex or skin colour as being much less worthy of attention than differences of class. Not that they are necessarily racist; there is a big difference between not being against the promotion of black people within the party and taking positive action to make sure it happens.

THE ROW shows up the the deep division in the party between the old-fashioned 'Labourist' men, probably working-class, almost certainly trade union members; and the newer, liberal men and women, who are not necessarily more left-wing, but are likely to be younger, relatively classless and more tolerant of other people's race, sex or sexual orientation. The second group has not failed to notice that while employed trade union members have done very well under this government, the people who have done worst — and therefore need most help from Labour — are unemployed and living in poverty: disproportionately female or black. They see that under the old Labourist model of the indivisibility of the working class, white men gain most, while women and blacks get left behind.

> ***'It is easy to assume that the row is between left and right. But that is too simple. The divide within the party seems more to be between different generations, and between Londoners and people from outside the capital'***

The same generation gap must be there in the electorate; and that now presents a dilemma for Mr Kinnock, for his middle-of-the-road policy risks alienating both sides. The young liberals (with a small 'l'), who have no particular class affiliation, might well look at today's unradical Labour Party and find that the Alliance appeals to them more. After all, the SDP is the only political party to have started ethnic monitoring of its membership, and even its constitution says: 'The Social Democratic Party exists to create an open, classless and more equal society, which rejects prejudices based upon sex, race or religion.'

Older Labour voters may be tempted the other way. Whatever Sharon Atkin claims, Mr Kinnock is clearly not a racist. But plenty of his supporters are. In the 1986 British Social Attitudes survey, a staggering 32 per cent of Labour voters admitted to being prejudiced against people of other races. (How many more thought it too embarrassing to own up?) These old-fashioned Labour voters will have read about the Black Sections row and seen newspapers associate black people with the 'loony left'. They are probably the sort of people who also object to gay rights and, perhaps, a unilateral nuclear defence policy. If they desert the Labour Party, they will not stop at the Alliance — whom they will see as just as unsound on gays, blacks and the bomb. They will go straight to the Conservatives.

Sadly, when race becomes an election issue, it is Labour which tends to lose support, usually to the Tories. In the 1970 election, when voters still had Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech fresh in their minds, academics estimated that the race factor gave the Tories a net gain of between 2.5 per cent and 6.7 per cent. And immediately after Mrs Thatcher made her notorious 'swamping' remarks about immigration in January 1978, the Conservatives jumped five points in the opinion polls. Recently, the Greenwich by-election showed a defection of the traditional Labour vote to the Alliance because of Deidre Wood's identification with the hard London left, and, by implication, its race policies.

The general elections of 1979 and 1983 were relatively clean on the race issue. But it shows every sign of raising its head at the next one, albeit in coded form. When the press brands London local authority leaders 'loony' or 'extremist', Bernie Grant and Linda Bellos seem to be the targets far more than, say, Margaret Hodge. And 'law and order', since the Broadwater Farm riots, is now established in many people's minds with clamping down on blacks in inner cities.

WHAT ABOUT the black voters themselves? They have, so far, been remarkably loyal to the Labour Party. At the last election, about two-thirds of them voted Labour, compared to only 28 per cent of the whole electorate. With such a high proportion of the black vote already, Labour is unlikely to get more. So even if Black Sections were now to be introduced, Labour might not win more black votes — just lose fewer of them.

For Labour cannot afford to take the black vote for granted. Immigrants, when they first come to Britain, tend to vote Labour, mainly because they are economically and socially disadvantaged. As they become more integrated into society, their voting patterns become more like the rest of the population. That is what happened with Jewish immigrants earlier this century; and what is just starting to happen with Asians now. A GLC survey in 1984 found that Asians in the top socio-economic group were twice as likely as whites to have changed the party they voted for between 1979 and 1983. Afro-Caribbeans may take rather longer to switch allegiance, but the danger is still there.

With hindsight, allowing Black Sections in the first place would have caused far fewer problems. Presumably Mr Kinnock was deterred then by the prospect of damaging press coverage. In fact, the row has probably produced more column inches than their establishment would have done. After all, whoever bothers to write about the fact that the Tories have thriving Anglo-Asian and Anglo-West Indian Conservative Societies with delegate rights to the Conservative Party Conference? □

Mary Ann Sieghart is the political correspondent of the Economist.
Peter Kellner is on holiday.

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1. The databank dossier

As Britain stands, irreversibly, on the brink of establishing a chain of private and public national computer databanks,* DUNCAN CAMPBELL *proves that people* do *care about their privacy

WHAT IF? . . . What if someone put together everything known about you in each official file and from every government computer, and assembled it into one big data dossier? What horrors would be there?

Such an exercise is fictional, and its results are false. Worse, by concentrating on exotic and speculative data, it traduces entirely the very serious concern that people have about how simple and basic information about them is held and used by others without their permission. It's not just central government that has established large and worrying databanks. Over the last five years, two commercial companies have set up larger databanks than those currently operated by the police, Inland Revenue, or DHSS. These commercial databanks have information on every adult in the country, almost without exception. With 43 million people on file in their giant computers, and 17,500 access terminals, there is already a commercial market for personal information annually worth tens of million of pounds.

Very soon, these private population registers will be followed by larger government systems. Joint registers between the Inland Revenue and the DHSS are already well established. New health computer databanks will in due course form another, integrated national network. Future government proposals to replace local rates with a compulsory individual poll tax or 'community charge' depend on setting up a computerised register of everyone who uses local authority services. An integrated 'Government Data Network' is to be introduced, according to a government announcement in January. So gradually, the newspaper fiction of a single 'Big Brother' computer system will become substantive fact.

The significance of the giant computers is enhanced by technological leaps in the speed of computing, and the reducing expense of information storage. *This progress is not matched by equivalent improvements in security and data protection. During the* Secret Society *investigation, we exposed a ring of people tapping information from police and government databanks.*

But the government wasn't prepared to co-operate at all with any of our enquiries. When *Secret Society* asked the Inland Revenue, DHSS and Home Office to show and talk about what they did with computers, these departments erected a uniform brick wall of secrecy.

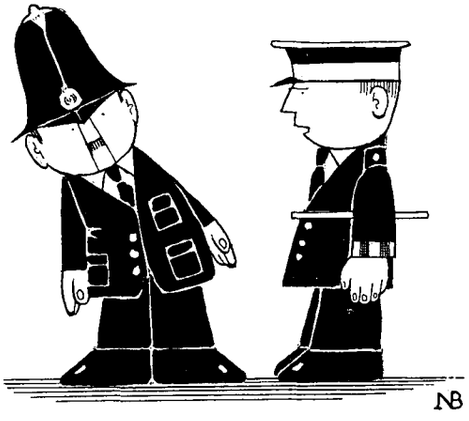
Penny a name

Two private companies — CCN systems of Nottingham, and the United Association for the Protection of Trade (UAPT) in Croydon — run Britain's largest computer databanks. Although credit references are the mainstay of UAPT's business (and a large part of CCN's), both companies spread their information business far wider. As well as receiving and passing on credit reference information, both companies have for more than five years used the Electoral Register — voters' lists — as the basis of computer databanks on the entire population.

This information is merged with many other databanks and sources of information. The Post Office's postcode system is used to index every address in the country. Every household in the country is classified into a range of socio-economic groups, ranging from inner-city/deprived/multi-ethnic to suburban/affluent, using data householders themselves supplied for the 1981 Census. Added to this are court judgements, and financial information about individuals and families from subscribers to the companies' services.

CCN have combined this information in a system called MOSAIC, which arranges for '40 million adults on the CCN database to be classified according to the area in which they live, combining financial, demographic, housing and Census data'. The system is 'designed to distinguish areas with different consumer preferences and characteristics'. The addresses are also linked to mailing lists of subscribers or customers that CCN's clients have provided, showing people's interests or purchases. Clients and subscribers get a discount if they feed in information as well as take it out.

Both CCN and UAPT have told journalists that they don't sell their information to private detectives and other snoopers. But they do. When *Secret Society* later filmed people looking at what was held on the CCN and UAPT databanks, we had registered to use their services in the name of a firm of private detectives.



'If there's one thing I detest, constable, it's a bent policeman'

CCN and UAPT buy lists of names on the Electoral Register from local councils for about a penny a name. Their computer checks cost from 50p to £1.20, depending on the information involved. There are 43 million names in CCN's 'Nationwide Consumer File', and the same number in UAPT's 'Infolink' service. A check on a given address will reveal, at a minimum, the names of all those over 18, or soon to be over 18, at a particular address. Each address is socio-economically coded, based on government Census data.

CCN call their system 'one of the most powerful tools around for the application of "cold" direct mail'. They will sell precise mailing lists of names and addresses, based on a sophisticated computer analysis of every household into families, single men, single women, and others. The age of all 17-20 year olds is also recorded. A CCN customer could thus order an address list of all 19-year-old single women living in a particular area.

CCN also offer a computerised debt collection system. From anywhere in the country, you can tell CCN's central computer that you're owed money and want it collected. But there's absolutely no check on the accuracy of this information. The computer will automatically harass someone without any check as to whether the debt was true in the first place. I tried the system out on myself — and, giving the address of the *New Statesman*, told CCN's central computer that I owed one of their clients £300.

There was no truth to this claim; I'd made it up that very minute. But I was soon threatened with court proceedings which would, CCN said, be instituted without further notice — unless I paid up within seven days. Written confirmation is only sought before a writ is actually issued — but even then, the client doesn't have to produce any evidence that the debt is real.

Public hostility

The BBC commissioned a special survey on public attitudes to private databanks: it found almost total public hostility. A standard sample of 1,000 people were asked in September 1986 what they thought of the information they gave when registering to vote being sold and used without their permission. Nearly eight out of ten — 79 per cent — disapproved or strongly disapproved of the sale of electoral lists. Only 7 per cent of the population *approved* of councils flogging off the voters' lists.

Gallup found even stronger hostility to UAPT and CCN having converted the lists into national computer databanks. Eighty-six per cent of the population disapproved or strongly disapproved of council voting rolls being sold to them — and most of the respondents (89 per cent) thought that the sale of voters lists to form a national computer databank should be made illegal. In other words, more than three out of every four people think that operations like CCN and UAPT should be outlawed.

But instead of legislating to protect privacy, the government has recently made protection more

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difficult. Special new regulations, passed in 1985, now make it compulsory for the electoral register, if kept on computer by a local authority, to be supplied in the form of electronic data to anyone who wants it. Such data costs £15 per thousand names, or 1.5p per name. This change was introduced to help political parties who have started using micro-computers for canvassing at election times. But it helps commercial databanks even more. Previously, they had to order printed rolls and type all the information in them into the computer themselves, a lengthy and expensive process.

Since it is compulsory for all adults to register to vote, there is now no legal escape in Britain from being put on file by the private databanks. Only if you live in Greenwich — where the local council is the only one in Britain to refuse to sell electoral information for commercial purposes — can your privacy be protected. Greenwich protects its ratepayers by printing only enough copies of the electoral register for its own and political candidates' needs — and no more. Greenwich spokesman Jim Radford told us that 'it would be quite immoral to sell it to commercial companies'.

Activities like CCN's and UAPT's should therefore be a straightforward breach of the new Data Protection Act, which lays down mandatory 'Data Protection Principles', one of which is that:

> Personal data held for any purpose . . . shall not be used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with that purpose.

There is little compatibility between exercising a right to vote, and finding the information you gave cropping up in a national computer databank. But Data Protection Registrar Eric Howe says that CCN and UAPT can get away with using the electoral register this way because of a special loophole in the Act. This allows anyone to do anything with any information that is statutorily published — even if they violate the Principles of the Act itself. Howe did take up the issue with the Home Office. But the Home Office wasn't interested, and refused even a request from Howe that the Registration form be amended to include a warning about what would happen to the information. 'I'm disappointed', Mr Howe told us.

'The foundations for a standard government identity number for every citizen have been laid. The official number already has a name — the NINO'

Hey NINO no

In the public sector, the foundations for a standard government identity number for every citizen have been laid. The official number already has a name — the NINO, short for National Insurance Number. But the new title presages a far wider use for the old NI number than merely accessing national insurance records. All DHSS and Inland Revenue files are now being computerised, with each individual identified directly by their NINO. A DHSS Departmental Central Index, listing all of Britain's 54 million inhabitants, is being established at the department's Newcastle computer complex.

The Central Index isn't an official secret. But public discussion of the plan hasn't been encouraged either. Ten years ago, the Home Office-appointed committee on Data Protection warned of the dangers of establishing a universal reference number such as the NINO. They cautioned that the implications for privacy were so severe that 'legislation should be specially enacted' before a standard population identification number was allowed to evolve. Based on the experience of other countries, they feared that eventually people would be forced to quote any standardised number in any and all dealings with authorities.

This has now begun to happen. Local authorities have been urged by the DHSS to start recording NINOs for their tenants, in case they claim housing benefit. Credit card-like NINO 'Numbercards' have been issued to school-leavers over the last two years, and to young unemployed people. MI5, the Security Service, already use NINOs as their main reference number. And the entire DHSS index of names and NINOs has been transferred wholesale to the Inland Revenue.

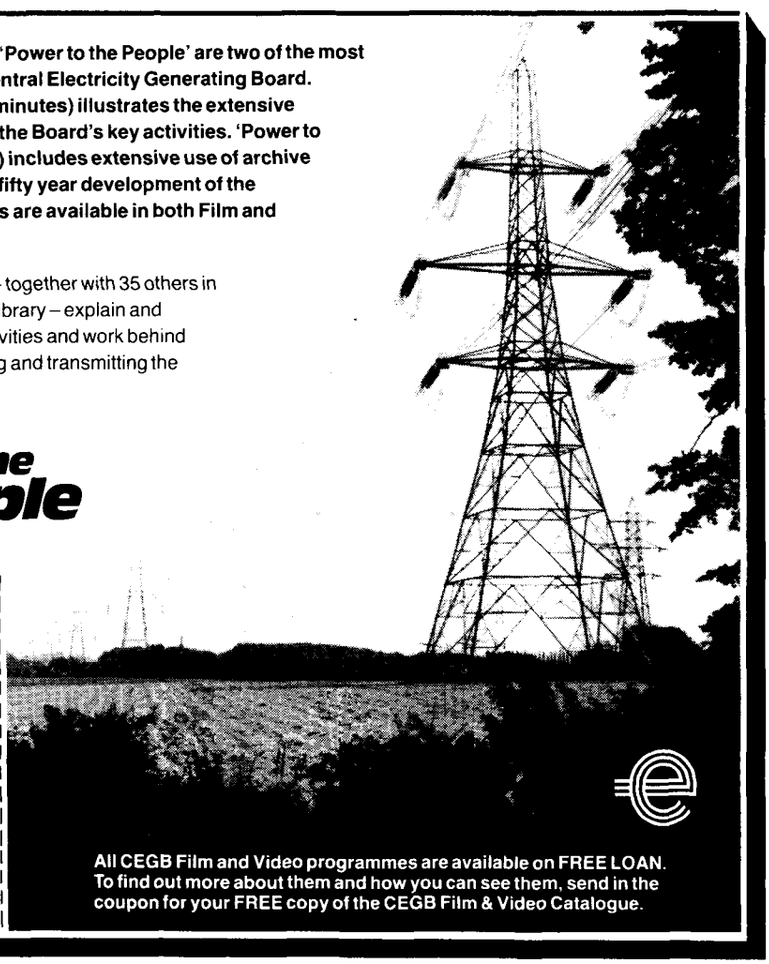
The index taken from the DHSS is now at the core of the Inland Revenue's own new national computer system. Former Inland Revenue officer Tony Meredith told us about the result:

> The National Taxpayer Tracing System will be enormously powerful. It will find anyone within about . . . within a few seconds, from any one of 25,000 terminals in any one of 600 offices. ▷

BEHIND THE POWER

'Behind the Power' and 'Power to the People' are two of the most recent films from the Central Electricity Generating Board. 'Behind the Power' (27 minutes) illustrates the extensive research underpinning the Board's key activities. 'Power to the People' (24 minutes) includes extensive use of archive footage, and traces the fifty year development of the National Grid. Both titles are available in both Film and Video formats.

These two programmes – together with 35 others in the CEGB Film & Video Library – explain and illustrate the policies, activities and work behind the vital task of generating and transmitting the nation's electricity.



Power to the People

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He added that IR computerisation means that there will be 'very few controls' on why members of staff access information. So 'if someone within the Inland Revenue wants to pass information to an outsider, it will be very, very easy. They cannot be stopped.' Had he found people trying to gain access to Inland Revenue information? Meredith said:

> We have experienced people attempting to gain information from the Inland Revenue; I have been involved in a few, a very few exchanges of information with other government departments. The Inland Revenue tends to believe that it always gains more than it gives away.

Despite stern promises of confidentiality, Meredith found that the tax department was prepared to give personal information away.

To ensure that every tax payment reference is accompanied by the NINO, Inland Revenue staff have recently sent out letters asking taxpayers to provide their NI numbers 'to ensure that your contributions are properly recorded'. Challenged, they admitted that the real reason for asking for the number was to 'put [their own] records on the computer'. But Inland Revenue press officials have refused to discuss this or any other aspect of their computerisation schemes.

Computerisation of data is spreading across all of the public sector:

- In the National Health Service, computerisation now starts automatically with the Notification of Birth to each health authority. Information about new children is thus automatically put on computer, without necessarily informing parents that a record has been created.
- The Office of Population Census and Surveys has set up a secret computer experiment linking all the computer information available about a selected one per cent of Britain's population. Its so-called 'longitudinal survey' links data about selected traceable individuals, throughout their lives. The people included in this databank don't know they're there, or why. In fact, they have been selected on the basis of four secret birth dates. If one of these dates is your birthday, then you're in the system, and it will be following you around Britain and abroad, linking together information from all the other databanks.
- The 'Suspect Index' used by immigration officers will soon be on computer. There are 20,000 names on the Index, including drug traffickers and terrorists. But part of the Index is used to record the names of British subjects that the government would like to follow around.

According to journalist and former immigration officer Jolyon Jenkins (who himself worked on the *Secret Society* series), the British names on the index include Vanessa Redgrave, Tariq Ali, and Kim Philby. There were also at least two journalists on the index, Jenkins recalled, David Leigh of the *Observer* — and Duncan Campbell.

Next year, like the rest of the EEC, Britain plans to introduce machine-readable passports. Soon after, Chief Immigration Officer Peter Tomkins told a House of Commons committee last month, the Home Office will set up a nationwide computerised Suspect Index, with 500 terminals at ports and airports. The new-style machine readable passports are pushed into a special reader, and details logged, automatically, by the computers. Although the Home Office have been evasive about the value of machine readable *British* passports to Suspect Index (SI) checks, internal Home Office papers reveal their thinking that:

> One of the major benefits of an automated machine-readable passport system is the potential for performing automatic SI checks . . . an effective SI system can only be achieved through some form of automation.

The same official document explained that getting the new passports offered security authorities the chance to 'increase the capacity' of the Index, at the same time as creating an effective means of monitoring when and where selected Britains were travelling.

Ask a policeman

The most dramatic part of the *Secret Society* investigation of government databanks was the exposure of a network of unofficial information tappers. Since some of them may now face trial, the precise identities and whereabouts of their activities cannot presently be revealed. But our investigations began when one man with police connections ran an advertising campaign in the south of England for what he described as 'illegal' services.

I heard about this, and — disguised as a Glasgow businessman — arranged to meet him at a hotel near where he worked. Later, in the hotel's car park, a hidden camera secretly filmed him as he took money to pass on to 'mates' in the police force. I gave him a list of names of people whose personal police and DHSS files he said he could get.

He was told that the names were those of people seeking employment in a politically sensitive public company, which feared attempts at infiltration by political activists. The names he had been given were, in fact, all rather serious political activists. So information should have been available.

A second meeting was held at a riverside pub — where unknown to my informant, an entire BBC camera crew once again lay waiting, this time in the undergrowth on the far side of the river. His words were relayed to them by a radio microphone. He explained to me how easy it was to get official information:

> The chap that does my [criminal record checks] is just a beat bobby. He gets on the radio and says I've seen this lad doing this that and the other. Anything known about him? Punch it into the computer.

The information tapper also appreciated the value of having a single identity number like the NINO for getting information out of the system. He explained to me that in his job 'everybody's traceable by a National Insurance number'. It was very useful to him because 'tax and National Insurance and things like that . . . are all linked together'.

Some of his first checks were unsuccessful; but when he came back with accurate details of the criminal record of an animal rights activist in London, BBC Assistant Director General Alan Protheroe ruled that, as a *prima facie* offence had been committed, the police should immediately be given all the information so that they could take over the enquiry. A major police enquiry was launched, and is still under way.

Private detective Gary Murray, one of the people approached by the information tapper a year ago, told us that in his experience this kind of unauthorised leak was by no means isolated.

> I've been in practice privately for over 15 years, and I've had contact with literally hundreds of private detectives and security consultants. Since 1968, that I can recall, most of them have had access to official records.

IN SIX MONTHS' time, the new Data Protection Act will be in full force, allowing people a limited right to see what's held about them on computer. But government files concerned with law enforcement, prisons, or national security are exempt. So are any records held on (or recently transferred to) paper. Access fees will be high, and the limited amount of information provided about computer databanks and what they hold is so diffuse as to make successful searching for improperly held information almost impossible.

In any case, the Act lets people do what they like so long as they actually register whatever they intend to do. Industrial data specialist Ted Cluff, who runs the Institute of Data Processing Management, cheerfully acknowledged that 'the weakness of the Act is that provided you declare what you're going to do, you can do almost anything you like'.

The Act created the new office of Data Protection Registrar, whom the government at first proposed — ludicrously — should be a Home Office official. And, according to Sir Norman Lindop, who headed the official Data Protection Committee from 1976 to 1978, the Bill gave the Registrar hardly anything to do at all. 'It just said he may do this and he may do that', Lindop noted. 'One can imagine him sipping sherry on a Friday afternoon and deciding that he wouldn't bother.'

The Data Protection Act also deceives members of the public about who has access to computer data about them. Although the Register is supposed to list everyone who has access to the information on computers, police and security organisations can lawfully tap any databank — without leaving a record that they've been there. In this respect, the Act requires data users to tell lies. Lindop found this deplorable, and calls it 'a fraud on the public':

> I think it's most regrettable that an Act of Parliament should encourage people to think that they can use double standards and get away with it.

Unless it is is rapidly strengthened, the Data Protection Act is already too late and too powerless to stop private national databanks being set up, or to prevent identity numbers and official population registers creeping in 'by stealth' — as Sir Norman Lindop's committee recently feared. It's true that few government developments in computer databanks have been total official secrets. But Whitehall's attitude to the Secret Society *programme spoke volumes. Campaigners for privacy are forever asked what the innocent person has to fear. But what does the innocent Whitehall department have to fear from candour? What have they got to hide?* □

Secret Society *is being transmitted on BBC-2 at 10.20 on Wednesdays. Next week in the* New Statesman *and on BBC-2: war emergency planning.*

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In the recent Budget, the duty on unleaded petrol was reduced – so now it's no more expensive than leaded petrol.

"What's it to do with me?" you may ask. "My car can't run on it."

Well, it may interest you to know that already many cars can run on unleaded petrol, and the number is increasing daily. In fact, very soon all new cars will be designed to run on unleaded.

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In fact, since mid-1986 we have already introduced a national network of over 100 strategically chosen sites selling Esso Unleaded.

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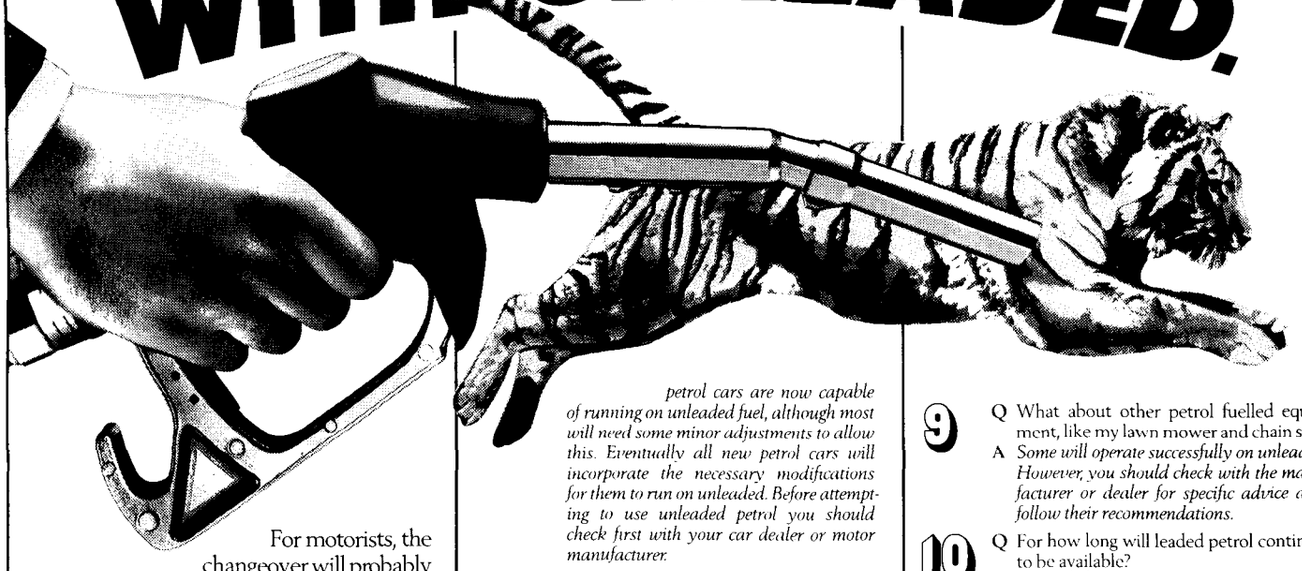

For motorists, the changeover will probably raise more questions than answers, which is why we've produced this page.

Alternatively, pick up the Esso Unleaded leaflets, including our Service Station Site Directory, at your nearest Esso Station.

We hope you will find them helpful.

1 Q What is unleaded petrol?
A *It is petrol to which no lead has been deliberately added.*

2 Q Why is lead added to petrol?
A *Small quantities of lead compounds can be added to petrol to increase its octane number. This allows the use of higher compression ratio engines with more ignition spark advance, which means improved engine efficiency and fuel economy. To replace lead we have to introduce more high octane compounds to compensate.*

3 Q What is 'low lead' petrol compared to unleaded?
A *Low lead refers to the normal leaded petrol which is currently available. This is because the lead content was reduced in all petrol to 0.15g per litre on 1st January 1986 from its previous level of 0.40g per litre, in line with British Standard 4040. Unleaded petrol is allowed to contain up to 0.013g per litre which is why it cannot be called 'lead free', although on the Continent this term may be used where unleaded cannot be translated.*

4 Q Can I use unleaded petrol in my car?
A *The majority of cars in the United Kingdom have been designed to run on leaded petrol. However, nearly 40% of post-1985 petrol cars are now capable of running on unleaded fuel, although most will need some minor adjustments to allow this. Eventually all new petrol cars will incorporate the necessary modifications for them to run on unleaded. Before attempting to use unleaded petrol you should check first with your car dealer or motor manufacturer.*

5 Q What is a catalytic converter?
A *Although not legally required in the UK at present, a catalytic converter is a device that can be fitted to the exhaust system. When the exhaust fumes pass through the converter, emissions such as nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide are burnt up or oxidised. Unfortunately, lead damages the catalysts, so they are only effective on cars already using unleaded petrol.*

6 Q Where can I buy unleaded petrol?
A *Esso were the first company in the UK to put unleaded on sale. And since then we have been increasing the number of our service stations that sell unleaded petrol. We now have more stations selling unleaded than all our competitors put together. For details of where you can buy Esso Unleaded please pick up a FREE copy of our latest site directory from any Esso station.*

7 Q How will I know which pump dispenses unleaded petrol?
A *Esso Unleaded pumps are clearly marked UNLEADED and will usually have a small pump nozzle and identification cover marked UNLEADED on the nozzle.*

8 Q What happens if I inadvertently put the wrong fuel in my car?
A *Given the safeguards mentioned above it would be very difficult for you to do so. However, an isolated incident may not be too serious. Unleaded petrol used in an engine designed to take leaded, or leaded petrol used in an unleaded engine, could eventually cause damage to the engine.*

9 Q What about other petrol fuelled equipment, like my lawn mower and chain saw?
A *Some will operate successfully on unleaded. However, you should check with the manufacturer or dealer for specific advice and follow their recommendations.*

10 Q For how long will leaded petrol continue to be available?
A *Unleaded petrol will be phased in over a number of years. Therefore both leaded and unleaded will be available for a transition period which will be as long as the present product is required to supply today's cars.*

11 Q What happens if I take my car to the Continent?
A *Both leaded and unleaded petrol are available in Europe. There may be slight differences in unleaded to take account of local conditions, but this is unlikely to affect a car that can run on unleaded petrol.*

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A watershed for black politics

In a two-part analysis of the divisions within Labour over Black Sections,* SARAH BENTON *reports on massive tensions within the movement; and* FARRUKH DHONDY *says they are not important enough to ban or to affect black voting patterns

Jez Coulson/IFL

Sharon Atkin tries to win round the Birmingham hecklers

THE BLACK Sections movement is now split down the middle. A meeting of some of its members last Sunday in Lambeth Town Hall issued a statement which papered over cracks, but did not mend them. At the heart of the split is the figure of Sharon Atkin, still Labour's candidate for Nottingham East — and the issue of how far black radicalism should compromise with the balancing act which is a parliamentary candidature. Black Sections have taken a hard pounding over the past two weeks: the effect of that may be, paradoxically, to draw some of the black candidates for Westminster closer in to the Labour Party — and to push others further out, into an as-yet uncharted world of autonomous black political activism.

This is, as one Black Section member described it to me, a watershed in British black politics. From its origins in the unreported undergrowth of politics several years ago, Black Sections had become — through an aggressive attack by Roy Hattersley and other Midlands Labour MPs, a raucous meeting of black activists broadcast on national TV and a distancing statement by four of Labour's black candidates for very winnable seats — a dramatic national issue; the sort of issue which determines the future of both individuals and political history.

Having spent several years creating a strong and vociferous black grouping within the Labour Party based on the agreed demand for the rights of Black Sections within the party, many now feel the limits of black sectionalism have been reached — and burst. Through the breach opened up by the hugely public row over the meeting in Birmingham on 7 April on black representation, the four candidates — Diane Abbott, Russell Profitt, Paul Boateng and Bernie Grant, each insisting on their unshaken support for Black Sections — stepped out to enunciate a distinct position: that the needs of the national party to which they belong must take precedence over the immediate political claims of the particular social group of which they are a part.

Though their support for the principle of Black Sections may not be in doubt, their statement did make the first public, collective crack in the politics of those who support Black Sections, and had, at least, publicly disassociated them from Sharon Atkin, a black candidate in a highly marginal seat who now faces some form of disciplinary action for her heated statements at the Birmingham meeting about Neil Kinnock, the Labour Party and who she wants to represent in Parliament.

None of Ms Atkin's colleagues in Black Sections or of her supporters in Nottingham East want to see Labour's National Executive Committee step in and 'dis-endorse' Ms Atkin as a parliamentary candidate. But a growing number say they would like to see her quietly resign. This would save them from the need to put on a show of united defence for Ms Atkin, when many disagree with her views, as well as with her public manner.

BEFORE THIS crisis, a number of the early founders of Black Sections — such as solicitor Paul Boateng — had discreetly let it be known that they had little sympathy for 'the clan' or 'the crew' who now run the Black Sections organisation. They are seen as sectarian, their tactical alliance with other 'hard left' groups unrepresentative of a wider black constituency and recklessly doomed to political failure. But the fragile foothold of black politics in mainstream political life put a defensive wall up around such differences.

That has now changed. The foothold is still fragile, the pressures of intolerance on their latitude to speak still immense, the horror of being seen as careerist Uncle Toms still powerful. But the desire to see some black MPs elected come what may, and to insist that not all black politicians have to be accountable to a peculiarly sectarian and guilt-inducing community is more powerful.

Last Sunday's meeting was attended by Bernie Grant, candidate for Labour-held Tottenham, and Russell Profitt, candidate for Tory marginal Lewisham East: both deeply unhappy by the way in which the Black Sections' row had escalated. Profitt, no stranger to controversy as race relations adviser in Brent, had found during canvasses in Lewisham that Black Sections now monopolise his putative constituents' concerns — much to his distress.

For the radical London-based leadership of Black Sections, however, the statement by the four parliamentary candidates was a betrayal. For Marc Wadsworth, a Thames TV reporter and National Chair of Black Sections, they had breached a simple principle: 'you don't shit on your friends when they're under fire.' The Black Sections Committee had written to the four asking them to attend the Sunday meeting though not, said Mr Wadsworth, 'in a spirit of recrimination'. If, he said, 'they say we've made a mistake under pressure, we can begin the rebuilding process'.

Older and wiser

Clearly, while everyone is anxious not to open up irreparable breaches, the four are in no mood to apologise to the national committee for the error of their ways. The initiative for their statement came from Diane Abbott, candidate for Hackney North, and a personal friend of Ms Atkin — a quick response to a threatened press avalanche engulfing all black candidates. For her, the difference is not between left and right, or between black nationalists and the rest, but between 'older and wiser heads' and the rest.

Several Black Sections supporters used the same language of maturity and inexperience to account for the rapid and dramatic developments in black

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Labour politics in the last fortnight. 'The Birmingham meeting showed us the need for discipline and strategy' says Ms Abbott. And among her strategic aims are to avoid pushing Labour leaders like Roy Hattersley into a position from which they can't climb down.

IT SEEMS extraordinary that an issue in which it was hard to stir a flicker of press interest a short while ago — the political representation of black people — should now be creating such public ructions. The implicit racism of much Conservative Party propaganda is partly responsible. It just so happens that most of their rogues' gallery of persons too mad, bad and dangerous to elect are black.

They insistently press an image of urban government falling prey to black outlaws, who exploit the soft belly of democracy to get their wicked way. Tory opposition to an elected police authority for London depends wholly on such imagery. At different times, Linda Bellos, Diane Abbott, Bernie Grant and now Sharon Atkin have been used as symbols of an evil and destructive force in Britain. As Marian Fitzgerald points out in her recent Runnymede report, 'Black people and party politics in Britain', their names, like the words 'law and order', crime, riot, immigration, have all become code for the black threat.

But there is fundamental disagreement inside the Labour Party on how to oppose such racism, on who can legitimately speak for black people and indeed on what political forms racism takes in Britain. And here we have the two unequal protagonists of Roy Hattersley and Sharon Atkin. In the right corner is the MP for Birmingham Sparkbrook, a man who without doubt has a powerfully patriarchal view of his constituency; it is his manor, inhabited by his people; their crucial political identity is as Sparkbrook constituents, not as members of any particular class or sex or race or even political opinion.

Giving weight to his position is his classic social democratic view of how racial, or indeed sexual, equality is striven for; and that is through a strong legislative framework of equal opportunities, backed up by an effective state agency. It is not a framework which gives any role to black political self-organisation. It certainly does not concede that, in a political party, blacks have a special right to define how black interests should be presented and fought for. That is a recipe for racial separatism and the fragmentation of the party; or, in the jaundiced view of his critics, for the weakening of the authority of Labour MPs like Roy Hattersley to manage the party in their way and their image. For Mr Hattersley is equally possessive about the conduct and character of his party.

His outrage at left-wing black Londonders encroaching on his patch is the proprietorial aggression of a man with a very strong sense of political territory. From such powerful feelings flow the letter he wrote to Linda Bellos and others warning them to keep out of his manor. It is not a position from which he can easily climb down.

Blood on its hands

The decision by Birmingham Black Sections to hold a large public meeting there on 7 April was made several months ago, and is part of the gathering momentum of that political fight. Several of those invited diplomatically stayed away, believing from early on that there would be political trouble. Diane Abbott was one of them, and says simply that she decided 'discretion was the better part of valour'. She tried to persuade Sharon Atkin not to go, and believes Ms Atkin would also have stayed away had it not been for Hattersley's letter. It then became a matter of political courage to turn up. This is disputed, and Ms Atkin herself now refuses to comment at all on the affair.

No one disagrees that the noisy and angry hecklers were very small in number and did not express the views of any member of Labour's Black Sections. And there is general agreement that after witnessing Linda Bellos struggling in vain to be heard, as she made a classic plea for class politics to prevail — her accusation against the Labour Party was that it failed to represent the working class, white and black — Sharon Atkin felt impelled to do better. In a spirit of rivalry, in a highly heated and emotional meeting, she determined to say what the audience would listen to, and would applaud. She succeeded.

Here are two verbatim quotations from a speech which was clearly tailored to the perceived needs of the meeting: 'I was told not to come to this meeting tonight if I wanted my parliamentary seat. Well, I don't want a parliamentary seat if I can't represent black people. If I'm not a candidate at the next election I don't give a damn; Mr Kinnock can hear that again and again. I don't give a damn because what I'll always do is fight for black people, for black people and first of all for myself and all of my kind so I don't give a damn about Neil Kinnock and the racist Labour Party.' And again: 'The Labour Party has blood on its hands, our blood because as long as it tells us we have no place in it we can only wait for it . . .' She went on to demand that the leadership 'must be changed and must be swept aside'.

THE QUESTIONS are whether the NEC can work out a constitutional formula for disqualifying Sharon Atkin from the Labour Party; and whether it would be politically right for it to dismiss one of its 14 black candidates — and one of only six in winnable seats — for her political views on race and party.

Several of Labour's constituencies would be happy to see the NEC take draconian action against Ms Atkin at its regular meeting next Wednesday. They include the right of the party which dislikes the vociferous leftism of Black Sections and those who see no reason why they should worry about racism and the representation of black people. They also include a sizeable number of black Labour Party members, a majority of whom do not support Black Sections and who are enraged at being described as 'docile' by the young activists.

The opposition of Bagot Singh, secretary of the Sparkbrook constituency, to Black Sections is shared by many others. And ironically, the constituency which Ms Atkin was trying most hard to reach, disaffected Afro-Caribbeans, would have their cynicism confirmed. For while Afro-Caribbean voters were long seen as Labour's most loyal supporters, the survey conducted for the Runnymede Trust's report on 'Political Parties and Black People' showed that Afro-Caribbeans were notably more cynical about the parliamentary process than any other group, with 58 per cent saying no, there was no way in which 'people like you' could influence the government compared with 46 per cent of whites, and only 15 per cent choosing voting as a way to influence government compared to 30 per cent of Asians.

The other side of Black Sections work, which was much more prominent in its early days, was the evangelical desire to politicise more of the black community, and involve them in the political process. That indeed was the ostensible reason for the meeting in Birmingham.

The barracking that met the speakers may not have been either black nationalist or separatist. A resolute distrust in the political process can be quite enough for community activists to insist that no true representative of their needs should take part in it. For many younger black activists, the chief agent of their oppression is not capitalism, or Conservatism, but the agencies of the state, whether police or the race relations industry. What true speaker for their cause would get enmeshed in the British state? Few aspiring white politicians have to face such dramatically conflicting demands from those whom they aspire to represent, with such heavy emotional undertones of guilt and betrayal.

This is the measure of the break which the statement of the four candidates represents. The loyalties of community defence are not enough and indeed cannot survive the rough winds of national political demands. Will Labour's Deputy Leader pipe down long enough for a new voice, which does not echo his sentiments but does not wish to shout him down, to make itself heard?

Sarah Benton

Speaking in whose name?

THE THREAT of 'autonomous' black organisations to European politics has, I suppose, existed since Hannibal crossed the Alps. Exactly two centuries ago a faction from the population of San Domingue enlisted in the French Revolution. It was given a voice, some positions, representation, some fraternity but, in the end, not much liberty or equality. This faction was mostly what they then called 'mulatto'.

The only parallel in modern British history is the sorry saga of Black Sections in (or not in) the

'And ever more came out of that same door wherein I went' . . .

This was the plaint of a man who could not escape the common round of conventional answers to his questions. Perhaps he was stuck in beliefs — maybe even sacred ones — but he was stuck. Is there no way out?

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Labour Party. Here for the first time is a sort of 'autonomous' black organisation knocking with bruised knuckles on the doors of the corridors of power and being turned repeatedly away. Some would say (though not in this journal) that Black Sections constitute the only lifeboat rowing frantically *towards* the *Titanic*.

Black Sections want the party and leadership to acknowledge that the black vote is channelled to the Labour Party by them. The leadership doesn't believe it. Blacks have been voting for the Labour Party before and since they became a ballast for the ballot box in very many constituencies. (In particular, Roy Hattersley doesn't buy it. He knows it to be untrue. He gets a substantial Asian vote in Birmingham by means and political appeals outside and against the platform of the Black Sections).

I would hazard a guess that very few people in the country believe that a constitutional formation within the Labour Party will deliver black votes which haven't committed themselves. The constituency Labour activists who accept Black Sections can't be foolish enough to buy this 'delivery' argument either. They support Black Sections for the moral and democratic reason that minorities ought to gain constitutional promotion. Also, in the inner-city boroughs where there are many blacks, a total white council and an imported white MP is a set-up that might smack of colonialism to parts of the black population.

They're right. In a party which professes the advancement of a class, blacks have to rise on a ticket of race advancement. The leadership is not opposed to race advancement. Neil Kinnock promised in a speech to the 1985 Labour Party Conference before the defeat of resolutions to establish Black Sections, to 'pass at the earliest possible time laws to punish race and sex prejudice'. The leadership has taken no action against black candidates who are selected without the official participation of Black Sections. What they are implacably opposed to is the organisation.

BLACK SECTIONS are a curious formation in Britain. This country has not developed any movement within the black communities for the promotion of black people into totemic positions in society. Yet the tradition from which Black Sections spring is that of the type of independent or 'autonomous' black organisations for which the US provides a model, and which have developed into organisations seeking representation across society.

The concept of autonomous organisations was formulated in the '60s, following the explosion of Black Power in the United States. At the same time, the West Indian and Asian population of Britain were forming their first autonomous organisations outside the Labour movement. There arose parties like the Black Power Movement, The Black Unity and Freedom Panther Movement, The Black Unity and Freedom Party and a hundred collectives fiercely dedicated to this 'autonomy'. There were examples nationally and internationally of what autonomy meant. It meant hostility to the state, to the established political parties, including the Labour Party, and in many cases to the unions.

Suddenly, there was a generation of blacks in Britain who were socialised by its institutions and suspicious of them. There were history classes, black studies, demonstrations and truly independent battles organised with the courts and against the police. It wasn't done with resolutions and composites. Offshoots of the Asians workers' associations (the IWA and its various wings) carried out some significant industrial actions. They staged strikes without the blessings of their unions, won some, lost some — but left the powder trail that led to Grunwick in 1977.

It was inevitable that the white left groups — as they used to be called — saw this energy and readiness to do battle and tried to recruit its strength. Several vanguard parties and vanguard organisations began to take race-as-politics seriously. Not having come from within the life of immigrants here, the best they could do was formulate policies of anti-racism. It was considered sophisticated to bore everybody with the endless distinction between *individual* and *institutional* racism.

An arithmetical formula was substituted for the flavour of experience: if you were working-class you were oppressed. If you were black as well, the oppression doubled, if you were a woman it trebled, if you were of homosexual inclination it quadrupled and so on. The multiplicity of burdens replaced the vibrancy and positiveness of the earlier 'autonomous' organisations. These knew what they were for, or were feeling towards it. The anti-racists only knew what they were against. Their search for a platform led them, as it led the vanguardists, as entering groups or as individuals, to the Labour Party.

"The black middle class wants real power and throws up Black Sections as its vehicle. Good luck to them"

It happened in America in a roughly parallel way. The leaders of the Black Power 'autonomous' organisations were the likes of Eldridge Cleaver, George Jackson, Bobby Seale and above all Malcolm X. All of them came from the hustler's section of the working-class. They were street-wise, jail-wise and when they achieved national status, they formulated clear and almost Marxist strategies for changing the USA.

The movement moved on. America got a ruthless black middle-class and with it the representation they sought in the cities and in national politics. *Party* politics.

BRITAIN'S immigrant community is much too young for it to have achieved representation on every rung of the meritocratic ladder. But several sections of the black community have discovered the joys of upward mobility. There are those who make it through money. The Asians can count a few hundred millionaires and a few thousand more who've moved commercially from pocket calculator to computer. They vote Tory or SDP and will do in increasing numbers, bringing with them the 'cultural' and religious organisations which aren't antipathetic to the ethic of Victorian family values and business.

Then there is a growing professional middle-class which finds itself in severe competition with their white contemporaries. Their main platform is concessional representation in the professions. They don't pressure, for instance, London Transport to recruit more blacks. They want real power — sharing with their white meritocratic counterparts and they throw up Black Sections as their vehicle.

And good luck to them. The leadership of the Labour Party has no business to say 'no'. They can't get them on the same grounds they got Militant, for being a party organised within the party, because the truth is that Black Sections have not delivered a programme and policy. Some of them are committed, as the left of Labour is, to disarmament, to scrapping immigration laws or regulations, to introducing a harder-line equal opportunities policy — other bits and bobs that are the policy of the whole or some organised section of the party.

At any election, in order to avoid confusion and get elected, or to prevent being slung out by Neil Kinnock, they have to say they go for the Labour Party manifesto and programme. There is no danger that Black Sections will bring in their wake the riotous section of the black working-class that fights the police and sets fire to cars and buildings. The most that it can bring to the party and the bureaucracies of the state that it captures is hordes of well-paid advisers and project-runners.

Their lack of a programme and policy is not dangerous to the leadership of the party. One cannot believe that the leadership continues to ban them from the crass motive of demonstrating to the white population that organised bodies of blacks are not popular with it. Labour's leaders have demonstrated that they wanted to distance themselves from Trotskyists, and we can be sure Kinnock feels it's done the party some political good. But slinging blacks out may not.

For the black community too, blackness is not all. From people who want to represent them, they ought to have a clearly stated perspective. The danger of *not* having such a perspective is written into the history of decolonisation. In all the countries from which immigrants to Britain come, there was an anti-colonial struggle in which the commercial and bureaucratic middle-classes fought to replace their white counterparts. The mass of the peasantry and working-class participated in the hope of improving their material lot. In many countries the struggle for independence resulted in the indigenous middle-classes controlling the state — and turning mercilessly on the rest of the population.

Those wishing to establish Black Sections, then, should differentiate clearly between demands such as positive discrimination in the professions, thought-supervision of officials by batteries of advisers, reserved offices in the corridors of power, the convoluted linguistic reform of council publications and street names and other petit-bourgeois struggles on the one hand — and the issues that preoccupy the black working-class; black youth unemployment, racial harassment, bad housing, police, courts, jails and the economic exploitation of black labour on the other. Then *they may claim to represent the people in whose name they now speak.*

Farrukh Dhondy

Farrukh Dhondy is a commissioning editor for Channel 4.

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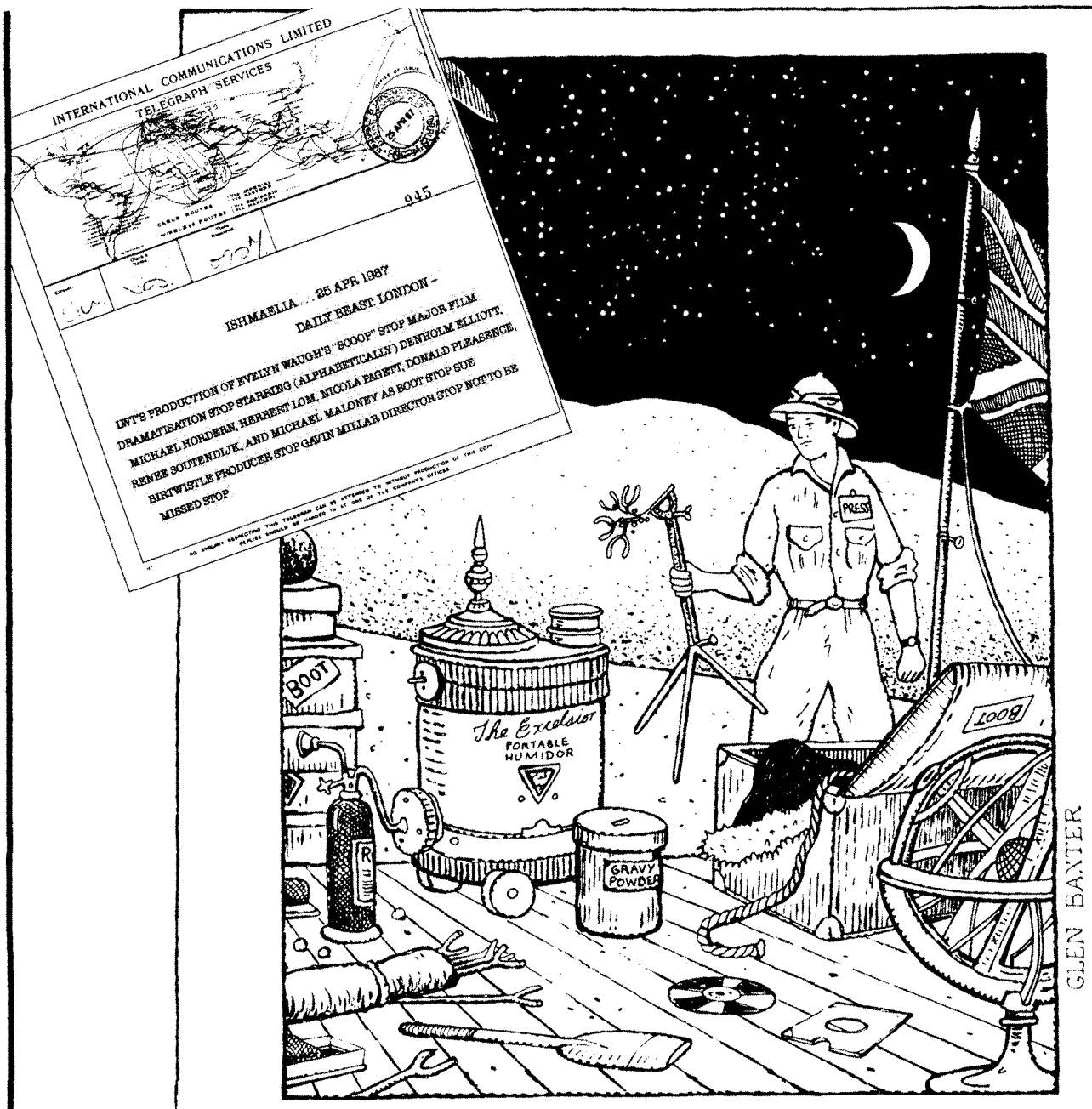

AS FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT FOR "THE DAILY BEAST", BOOT TRAVELLED WITH ONLY THE BAREST ESSENTIALS

SCOOP

SUNDAY AT 9·00PM

LWT

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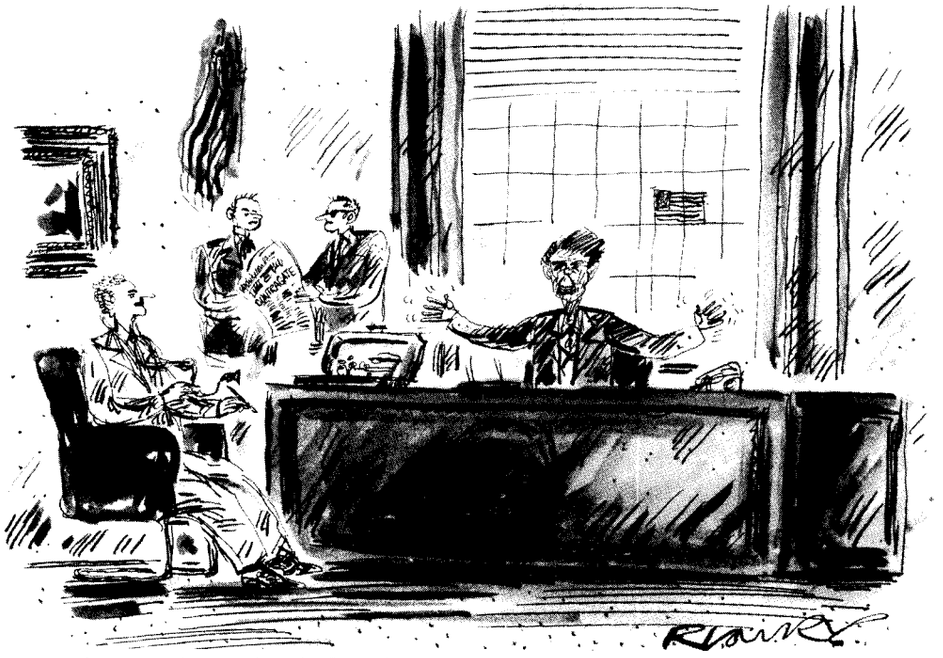
The control of terror

We continue our defence series with an assessment of the process of disarmament.* MICHAEL SHEEHAN *says that arms control is not about disarming, but about achieving stability



"It's worse than we thought, Doc. My left hand doesn't know what my right hand's doing!"

GENERALLY SPEAKING the public favours step by step disarmament and it assumes that this is what arms control is all about. In fact arms control has little to do with disarmament.

The disarmament approach believes that high weapons totals can lead to war. Arms controllers, by contrast, argue that there is no simple correlation, that weapons are as normal a feature of the peacetime environment as of the wartime environment, and that weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, can maintain peace.

What arms control *does* try to do is to discriminate between those weapons which threaten the stability of the balance of power and those which do not. Weapons which threaten stability are opposed, those which maintain or enhance it are supported. Stability is the objective, not disarmament.

If stability can be achieved at lower levels of weaponry and expenditure, so much the better, particularly since a great deal of military effort simply cancels out the efforts made by the other side, and arms control *does* sometimes lead to reductions — as with the proposed INF deal. Just as often, however, it leads to increases. Since small forces are more vulnerable to slight advantages for each side, the arms control approach favours seeking parity at very high levels of weaponry, where any marginal differences in numbers on each side will have no practical significance. Thus, during the 1970s, arms control was successfully achieved as the superpowers stabilised the balance of power; but it was done by mutual build-ups rather than by reductions, leaving the public feeling that its wishes were being ignored — as indeed they were.

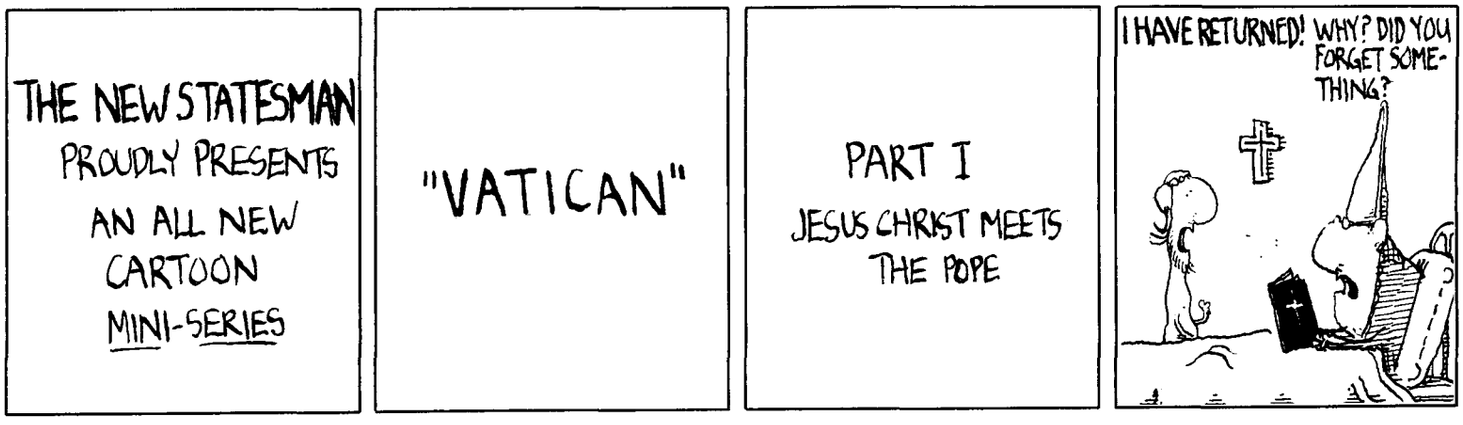
The essential purpose of arms control is to make the world safe for deterrence. It is not thought accidental that Europe, the most heavily armed region on earth for the last 40 years, has also been the most peaceful. Nuclear weapons are seen as making superpower war impossible and therefore (President Reagan's pious hopes notwithstanding) there is no desire among the arms control community to abolish all nuclear weapons. However, at the current very high levels of warhead numbers there is plenty of scope seen for cutbacks which do not threaten 'stability'.

These two *political* caveats — that arms control does not aim to produce significant disarmament and that it rejects the idea of profound reductions in nuclear weapons totals — should be kept in mind when looking at the *technical* obstacles to arms control. The object of the exercise in arms control negotiations is not so much to reach agreement as to be seen by the public as trying to do so and to pin the blame for failure to reach agreement on the other side. It is a mechanism for tranquillising anxieties and a theme in the political relationship between the superpowers, rather than a straightforward problem-solving exercise, with occasional reductions having a symbolic rather than a strategic purpose. That it is largely a ritual does not make it less important in setting limits to what would otherwise be a brutally unrestrained military competition.

Verification

Because of its symbolic importance there are times when governments do genuinely want to achieve arms control agreements involving an element of reduction. It is at this point that the baleful effects of technical obstacles come into play. Perhaps the most constraining of these is the verification issue, which has received more attention than any other aspect of arms control policy. It has proved consistently obstructive because it is an essentially judgmental and political activity. Monitoring the other side's activities to obtain information is a fairly straightforward exercise: the problems arise when it comes to deciding what the data obtained actually means. A great deal of the data will be ambiguous — and the more ambiguous it is the greater the role subjective, political interpretations will play in giving it meaning.

A logical approach to verification was that put forward by Dr Harold Brown, President Carter's



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Defence Secretary, who called for 'adequate' verification capabilities based on the assumption that any cheating the other side succeeded in carrying out undetected would be too small-scale to be militarily significant. Any cheating large enough to matter militarily would be too large to keep hidden.

Against this approach the Reagan administration has set the standard of 'absolute' verification requiring absolute certainty. Unfortunately this is not only impossible to achieve in a technical sense, it is also impossible to achieve in a logical sense. Anyone so mistrustful as to require absolute proof will not recognise it as such even if they get it. If there is no evidence of non-compliance, he will not see this as proof that no cheating is under way but will simply assume that somehow the Soviets are *still* managing to hide their illegal activities. If verification is to make arms controls possible, there must exist some willingness to be reassured. In technical terms the verification capabilities available at present are quite adequate to sustain progress in arms control, given the political willingness to achieve this goal.

Domestic totems

It is widely assumed that 'the other side' always thwarts arms control. But it has also become impaled upon the totems of technological 'progress' and domestic politics. Certainly one of the crucial issues for arms control is the impact of unplanned and unrestrained exploitation of new technologies. Politicians find that they have very little real choice when it comes to weapons development, because they are already committed by the decisions of engineers and project managers. By the time American politicians became alert to the dangerous strategic implications of multiple-warhead (MIRV) technology, MIRV-ed warheads had already been flight-tested, the new missiles to carry them had already gone into production and the conversion of older submarines to carry MIRV-ed Poseidon missiles was already under way. As it is impossible to distinguish between single-warhead missiles and MIRV-ed missiles using satellite photography, once flight-testing had occurred arms control was left stranded. Lord Zuckerman has argued that the nuclear weapon scientists 'have become the alchemists of our times, working in secret ways which cannot be divulged, casting spells which embrace us all'.

Domestic bargaining has proved an equally powerful logjam in both the US and the USSR. One Soviet diplomat told a Western colleague that Brezhnev had 'spilled blood' to get SALT II through the Kremlin bureaucracy. One presumes he was speaking metaphorically. President Carter in his memoirs maintained that SALT II had needed as much negotiation within the United States as it did with the Soviet Union. In a Congress of 535 members, 34 Senators can block the ratification of a treaty: the Executive's fear of Congress rejecting a treaty has left the United States in the peculiar position of having ratified hardly any of the arms control treaties it has signed with the Soviet Union. The obligations of states under treaties they have signed but not yet ratified are governed by the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. And, yes, the US has signed this convention, but has not yet ratified it.

Nowadays the US appears to be engaged in a permanent election campaign. Together with the power of a minority of the Senate, that means it is extraordinarily difficult to push arms control through the American system. This difficulty has been made worse in the past by the pursuit of arms control in the form of unwieldy catch-all treaties like SALT, which attempt to cover so much that there is virtually bound to be something 34 Senators will object to in it somewhere. A more promising approach is to go for smaller, discrete packages such as the INF agreement currently under negotiation.

At the end of the day however the question is one of political will. President Kennedy's personal involvement and direction led to the negotiations for a Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963, producing an agreed treaty within ten days. A similar centralised control by President Nixon in 1972 led to the rapid conclusion of the SALT I agreements. There are technical and bureaucratic obstacles to arms control, but they are not the most important. When a conservative President *needs* an agreement, the technical obstacles tend to become suddenly less significant. In practice, progress in arms control proves the primacy of politics. If both sides want a deal obstacles can be overcome. If one side doesn't, it is always possible to elevate technical difficulties into apparently insuperable barriers.

In any case if the public wants disarmament it will have to call for just that. Arms control is about the search for stability, not reductions as such; it can be argued that arms control has succeeded for 20 years because it has helped to produce stability. To accuse it of not achieving disarmament is to accuse it of failing to achieve an objective it has never actually sought. □

Michael Sheehan is a researcher at the International Institute for Strategic Studies and is the author of several books on defence including Arms Control: Theory and Practice *(Blackwells, Oxford, 1987).*

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Faith at the back

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

reports on a terrible month for Ronald Reagan

Washington

LAST WEEKEND, I went to preach the first sermon I have ever been invited to give. It was at the Mishkan Israel temple in New Haven, Connecticut, which draws a large congregation of well-to-do and well-educated Jews. Before I gave my address, Iwas told by the rabbi that perhaps 50 per cent of those attending had voted for Ronald Reagan last time. This pessimistic estimate was given a downward revision by the retired but still active rabbi Robert Goldman, who acts as emiritus to this synagogue and who married Arthur Miller to Marilyn Monroe. Goldman, who has been a commanding figure in every reform and radical movement since the '30s, said that he could not believe that more than a quarter of those in the body of the hall had voted to re-elect the President.

After the service there was a question period. Not one question reflected the least sympathy for Reagan. After a bit of this, I asked if there were any Reaganites present who were too shy to speak. There was some laughter, but no more. 'Can I write, then', I said, 'that in the whole of this distinguished assembly there is no one who still supports him?' The crowd of 400 or so broke into applause. Then I saw one dissenting hand go up at the back. It was the janitor, who paused in his cleaning-up of the place to say that he still had faith.

You can interpret this incident either as a collapse of Reagan's support, or as a survival of it among the blue-collar Americans who were once his most important conquest. I wouldn't like to generalise too much myself. Cognitive dissonance is still a very noticeable feature of the American political landscape. The most recent *Washington Post*-ABC News opinion poll, for example, shows that 65 per cent of the people now believe that Reagan is hiding the truth about the Iran-Contra scandal. This compares with 49 per cent who thought the same thing a month ago. And in the course of the last month, the press and television have almost dropped the subject entirely. Thus an anti-Reaganite might argue that the people are smarter than the pundits, and just take longer to make up their minds. But an anti-Reaganite would also have to contend with the other crucial finding of that poll, which is that a majority of voters still believe Reagan to be generally honest.

> ***'Gorbachev has made it impossible to demonise the Soviet Union in the way that the Reaganites need it to be demonised for their world view to make any sense. It has been most interesting to see the fixed grins that they wear when they speak about the 'fascinating new situation'' created by the General Secretary'***

So much of American public discourse is concerned with imagery and impressions. These perceptions, and their management, were once the special province of Ronald Reagan. Looked at in the medium run, these images and impressions seem at the moment to be telling more against him than otherwise. In fact, the iconography of Reaganism is being defaced and derided wherever you look.

First, of course, there has been the exposure of the hard-liners and fanatics in Oliver North's White House command, who operated the 'stab in the back' doctrine that had been promulgated by Reagan since Vietnam. As the Senate hearings convene early next month, we are going to have an even closer look at the operations of the paranoid right-wing mind. A documentary on the connection between this group and the drug and crime lords of Central and South America, which I mentioned a couple of months ago, was finally aired by CBS on the Monday before last. The witnesses named and interviewed in it will be taking the stand soon after the chairman's gavel comes down.

Then there is the chaos on Wall Street, with revelations of insider trading, double accounting, cocaine harvesting and the rest of it. In its atmospheric effect, this too discredits the Reagan ethos of unashamed greed and financial growth without roots. Ivan Boesky was a White House favourite, appointed by Reagan to some influential commissions in return for some hefty donations to the Republican National Committee. Every disclosure from the work of the Securities and Exchange Commission tends to suggest that the Reagan boom was a spiv bonanza of the most vulgar and pointless kind. Since all but a few Americans have some interest, however indirect, in the stock market, this is not a scandal that is confined to brokers' clubs or boardrooms.

Hardly less impressive has been the appalling revenge visited by an ironic fate on the Christian extremists. Ever since the revelations about Jimmy Bakker and his memorable 15 minutes, the revenues and the pomposities of the right-wing evangelists have become the prime-time subject they should have been years ago. It was to audiences like these that Reagan gave his 'evil empire' speech. It was to them that he gave his empty pledges about family values and prayer in the schools and the restoration of national pride. The sheer tawdriness and cheapness of the company he kept is a fitting epitaph for a decade of piety and cant — not to mention a decade of campaign contributions screwed out of the sick, the afraid and the credulous.

SO MUCH for the domestic front. Even these humiliations are eclipsed by two developments in the game of nations. The first, obviously, is the rise of Gorbachev. Whatever view may be taken of his chances or his motives, he has made it impossible to demonise the Soviet Union in the way that the Reaganites need it to be demonised for their world view to make any sense. It has been most interesting to see the fixed grins that they wear when they speak through clenched teeth about the 'fascinating new situation' created by the General Secretary. For the moment — in fact for the first moment that many people can remember — Manichean anti-Sovietism has lost its allure. Without this ideological cement, there are bits of the Reagan consensus that just will not stay joined together.

Many economists have been pointing out for many years that the fanatical pursuit of rivalry with Russia has distorted and maimed the American economy and made it less and less fit to compete with its chief civilian rival. Reagan's signature on the trade sanctions measures against Japan is a gigantic confession of failure. It is an admission that the US military-industrial complex put too much stress, and too many resources, on and into a fruitless arms race. It concedes that in fields like semiconductors and VCRs the United States threw away its early lead. It is also a confession of despair about one of the great post-war achievements of the American establishment; the peaceful and mutually prosperous resolution of historic differences with Japan.

This has been a terrible month for Reagan and for Reaganism. He may have done some Washington-based image repair, but he has shown himself unfit and unprepared to govern even on the terms of the Establishment. This is not to say that things may not soon get very much worse. □

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ECONOMICS

The women of the sugar factory

Jeremy Seabrook

GOATS WANDER freely round the compound of the municipal dispensary at Byculla in central Bombay. Outside on the pavement are the shelters of recent migrants to Bombay — structures of bamboo, cardboard, sacking and plastic; the domestic labour of women highly conspicuous — pounding turmeric on a flat stone, washing children from a tin labelled Mushroom Soup, scouring pots with a gritty mud paste, tending the sick who lie on string beds in the road.

Behind the dispensary is a disused garage, a bare green-washed room with palmyra mats on the stone floor. This is the premises of SPARC, the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres, a group working with women, which last year undertook the first reliable census of pavement-dwellers. They are working to resist the destruction by the authorities of their fragile sidewalk homes, and to demand land where they can build their own houses free from threat of demolitions. There are now more than 600 women and their families involved, including a group of prostitutes from the nearby Kamathipura red light district.

It is three o'clock in the afternoon. There are perhaps 50 or 60 women seated on the floor of the garage, with many more standing outside, sarees raised against the fierce sunlight. They are being issued with membership cards and bank books in their own names. Most make the mauve-coloured thumbprint of the illiterate. The money they save will go towards the purchase of land from the municipality.

Most of those meeting today are working, or have worked, in the brothels. Those who are too old labour as domestics for the younger women. Some of them live on nothing more than a wooden bed on the pavement. The women say they are employed in the 'chini-kharkana', the sugar factory. It is a joke that not only describes Bombay's extensive sex industry, but also contains more than a tang of bitterness at the circumstances — poverty, landlessness — which forced so many of them to leave their home in Sholapur, the sugar-producing district of Maharashtra.

The experience of the women might have been expected to brutalise or degrade them. Some were taken as young girls for domestic service in Bombay by men visiting remote villages and were sold to the brothels. For others the sex industry was part of their upbringing: others were widowed or abandoned. For most of them such traumas are now a distant memory. The women are older now, some sad-faced and heavy, others lithe and energetic, many of great mature beauty. One of the reasons they give for wanting to organise is to give their children the opportunity of a different life.

SOME OF THE women still work in the houses, renting a room by the hour if they can find a client, colourwashed rooms with white strip-lighting and grilles at the windows, bare melancholy places. Others fetch water, do cleaning and cooking for perhaps two or three prostitutes, earning 100 rupees a month from each one. Some have invested in small businesses, selling vegetables or cigarettes. One woman has given money to the man she lives with to make chappals; another makes papad and bhakri (flat bread) which she sells in the street.

The brothels are run by an akka ('older sister'), although they are controlled by men. The men are easily identifiable — steel reflecting sunglasses, felt caps, golf chains, pointed shoes. A woman tells how she was dumped in the *koti*, left without food for a few days until she realised that she had no choice. Virtually captive, there was no way she could communicate with her home; being illiterate, she couldn't even send a letter. Another tells of her astonishment when she was presented with a selection of coloured powder and make-up materials, and wondered what it was all for. All agree that they are lucky: there are women who have not been outside for ten years. Some are allowed out only with regular high-paying customers who have an account at a particular house. There are stories of men who become attached to 'their' girls, and marry them. Occasionally, the brothel-owner will accept payment for the release of a woman.

There is a wide range of price — from 5 to 500 rupees. There are five classes of establishment, some discreet and luxurious, the majority functional, some squalid. A woman must make at least 50 rupees a day. She pays 10-15 rupees to the owners, who have their own goondas (strong-arm men). The akka has to be paid, as do the taxi-drivers and touts who seek customers, and the police must be given their bribe. Men are employed to visit villages in search of new recruits. 'Sometimes they pick up college girls, get them emotionally involved, promise marriage, and then deliver them to the brothel, perhaps pregnant.'

The women have joined the wider Mahila Mandal, the women's collective organised by SPARC. Many have designed the house they would like; you have only to see how they live on the pavement to appreciate their powers of improvisation and creative use of limited space. There is to be an exhibition of houses which the women have constructed themselves, and the most popular design will be chosen as the prototype for a new community. The women of Kamathipura are the only ones to have been organised by profession; the others are organised by neighbourhood. There was some doubt at first as to whether the sugar factory workers would be acceptable to the others. It soon appeared that the common problems of child care, of insecurity, of exposure to the rains, of harassment and of working for other people easily overcame any differences.

THE WOMEN HAVE renamed their settlement 'Shantinagar' — city of peace, in order to avoid the associations with the brothel district. In the early evening, the area is at its most theatrical: the four-storey houses are illuminated through the barred balconies; the women stand in the doorways with a looking glass, trying to catch the last of the fading light — weaving a jasmine garland into a plait of hair, tightening the lime-green or yellow saree around the body, placing silver toe-jewellery, painting fingernails bright pink, winding rows of beads or pearls around the neck; waiting for some of the thousands of men in Bombay who are unattached or whose families are in the village, or those who will return afterwards to wherever unsuspecting wives are preparing the evening meal.

The street is about ten yards wide. Opposite the houses are the living spaces of the older women. They live in an area no bigger than that occupied by a wooden or metal cot, sometimes with a rudimentary canopy — a length of polythene over a bamboo frame which makes it look like a four-poster bed. Some have contrived a sketch of a house against the brick wall — some sacking stamped Fertilizer or Poison, a packing-case marked Fragile or Mombasa or Liverpool. They are preparing the evening meal: a stove of three bricks and fuelled by sticks and straw, cutting up red chillis or making a paste of tamarind to give savour to the unleavened bread. One or two people own a metal cupboard, with a bolt and padlock, in which they keep any belongings of value — a few utensils, some clothes, an alarm clock. On the wall are little shrines, with effigies or pictures of gods and tiny oil-lamps.

The alley is cluttered with groups of men playing cards, boys selling boiled eggs, women offering aubergines or tomatoes set out on a square of sacking, or a basket of oranges or limes.

The more prosperous houses have an illuminated panel over the door which says 'Welcome'; a woman sits at each door with a metal folding chair and a business-like table in front of her. The women who were at the meeting in the SPARC office say 'Welcome to our home' with ironic ceremony. 'We have the tallest houses in Bombay' — indicating the wheeling crows and the orange afterglow of the sky. 'Come into my house', showing the way into the obscurely demarcated territory of a tin trunk and a bed, against which a neighbour's equally sparse possessions are carefully stacked. The women get up at four o'clock in the morning, because that is the only time they can bathe and wash in privacy; they must remain at the disposal of their employers until late into the night. Few of them are aware that the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act comes into force this year, whereby the detention of women or children for the purposes of prostitution is punishable with a minimum of seven years' imprisonment. In any case, it is too late to be of much use to them.

They talk freely of the men who deserted them, the employers who abused them, the lovers who introduced them to the brothels; a story of male exploitation, control and neglect which has left a deep residue of anger — an anger that had no outlet in these places run by landlords, pimps, goondas and the police, until it found expression in the organisation of the SPARC housing project.

The women will save enough money to pay for the modest dwellings which they will have designed and constructed themselves. They will use the cheapest materials and provide their own labour, at a cost less than half anything that industrialised construction would involve. Whether the municipality of Bombay will provide them with the land they need is another matter. Yet the hope and strength which the women of Byculla in general, and of Shantinagar in particular, have given each other, represent a force that will not now easily be restrained. □

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REPORT

The strain in Spain

Strikes and demonstrations in Spain over pay, redundancies, unemployment and the Socialist Party's vision of the future show every sign of spreading.

TOM BURNS ***reports from Madrid on 'the general sense of collapse'***

WHAT MANY FOREIGNERS, and many more Spaniards, will remember about Easter 1987 in Spain is that they were unable to get to their *Costas*, because charter flights took a hammering from ground staff strikes at Spanish airports. What future historians of Spain will note is that the great divide of the *Familia socialista* had ceased to be a secret. Felipe Gonzalez and his Socialist government are not on speaking terms with the trade unions in general and with their own fraternal trade union in particular. They are in fact speaking different languages.

Sensitive commentators should spare a thought for Pablo Iglesias, the grandfather of Spanish Socialism who founded both the party and the union just over 100 years ago. The illegitimate son of a washerwoman who took other people's laundry to Madrid's Manzanares river and a printer by profession, Iglesias put the unity of the 'Family' above every other consideration. His bust, granite and huge like that of Marx at Highgate, and pockmarked by the bullets of Franco's troops at the end of the Civil War, stands in the entrance hall of the party's headquarters in Madrid. Iglesias had a modest flat in this same building. A few years back the party, now wealthy and powerful, bought the whole block, kept the facade and rebuilt the innards putting in soft carpets, softer pastel paints, piped hi-fi music and the sort of doors that open with plastic cards.

Returning to the present, the current disputes in Spain in the fifth year of government by the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) constitute a sobering business. Strikes and demonstrations involve a whole cross-section of the population, from miners to doctors. A highly popular government and administration has suddenly lost favour. Gonzalez and his team now appear like a row of coconuts on a shy, with everyone willing and anxious to have a throw. What is really sobering is that a consensus that has guided Spain safely through more than a decade of post-Francoism has broken down. If the PSOE and the fraternal Union General de Trabajodores (UGT) cannot march in step, who can?

The disputes fall into at least three categories. There are those for more pay, there are those against redundancies and then there are those that are directly against Gonzalez and the PSOE vision of whither Spain is going. Iberia's staff wants to break the 5 per cent limit imposed by the government on public sector pay awards. Employees are well aware that the national airlines stand to make good profits this year and they need no reminding that for the past four years they have slipped down the wage ladder and that their pay awards have been pegged to below the inflation rate. Construction workers have struck for higher wages because they are fully conscious that a building boom is underway. General Motors workers — big profits again — are also on strike for a better wage deal and the union negotiators have dug in their heels over a third shift.

Miners and steel workers are in the second category. The question here is one of early retirements and non-replacement of the natural wastage, as well as straight lay-offs. A few facts in this context. Unemployment among the under-25s is around the 50 per cent mark. The 2.7 million registered in labour offices as seeking jobs represent more than 21 per cent of the active working population. There are some 200,000 entering the job market every year. Unemployment benefits cover just over 30 per cent of the registered jobless and a 1984 government pledge to bring this up to 48 per cent by the end of last year has been shelved. The government claims that around a million of the job-seekers are in fact employed in the underground, 'black' economy.

In the third category, doctors are on strike because the government plans to ban them from holding down jobs in the public and the private health sectors. The threat here is that the health system is going to be 'statified' by the Socialist government. Hospital staff who once spearheaded the movement for better public health and were moderately well organised by the UGT have stood back from condemning the doctors and have added their own pay demands to the dispute. Students, or at least some of them, are on strike because there is not enough socialism. Secondary students who caught the headlines at the beginning of the year have been very effectively organised by a 'militant' tendency which is grouped around a weekly called *Nueva Claridad*. The burst of teenage political activity caught the government by surprise and was greeted with delight by the UGT which provided *Nueva Claridad* and the student union with printing facilities, meeting rooms and funds. Other students are out on the streets because they have virtually lost hope of finding a job.

> ***'At least two out of every three Spaniards involved in the myriad disputes voted for Gonzalez in last June's general elections . . . For the Socialist government the situation is baffling. It is at a loss for explanations as to how so many could suddenly turn against it'***

In one way or another the UGT has a hand in all the categories. Cabinet ministers and PSOE officials say that they have been stabbed in the back by their brothers. Unimpressed by such dramatic talk, the UGT is styling itself as the guardian of the Pablo Iglesias heirloom. Nobody is calling on Gonzalez to building socialism now, except, of course, *Nueva Claridad*. But the UGT *is* saying that jobs are sacrosanct, that Spanish wages are lower than anywhere else outside Portugal and Greece in the European Community and that if the economy is growing at 3 per cent a year and if the stock market doubled its value in 1986 *and* if the private banks returned profits of up to 40 per cent, there has to be a better share out.

There is now a general sense that a collapse is taking place. On a day in early April when the Madrid metro was on strike, the main Paseo de la Castellana Boulevard was clogged by a line of ambulances stretching for miles, three abreast and their sirens all screeching. No planes for Easter; no trains either. Travelling by car was hazardous because the petrol pump attendants were on strike. The list could be endless. Doctors and nurses, thousands of them, were at one point early in April blowing whistles outside the health ministry and following a mock funeral of the health service, horse-drawn hearse and all, around the streets of Madrid. Students staged their own carnival-style demo with a teach-in Madrid's Puerta del Sol. It was more serious in Cadiz where shipbuilders, whose yards had not had an order on the books for months, battled with police. There was rioting also in the mining valleys of Asturias which have been the cradle of so many Socialist leaders and whose coal nowadays sells at half what it costs to extract from the seams.

The worst violence by far is in Reinosa, a normally sleepy town in the so far conflict-free northern province of Cantabria. The threat of lay-offs in the local steel plant created an overnight emergency. Some 500 civil guards, a dozen armoured cars and a couple of helicopters were [and still are] required to keep the railway line that passes through Reinosa (pop. 13,000) free of barricades built of concrete sleepers.

At least two out of every three Spaniards who were involved in the myriad disputes voted for Gonzalez in last June's general elections. That poll was a renewal of confidence in the Gonzalez team which won by a landslide in October 1982 and created the first all-PSOE government in Spain's history. For the government the situation is baffling. It is at a loss for explanations as to how so many could suddenly turn against it.

The unkindest cut is certainly the loss of UGT support. The government, and the Socialist Party, says that Spain is now ruled by a progressive government that is committed to solidarity and that is, without a shadow of a doubt, the best that the country has ever experienced. The UGT counters with charges of an 'aristocratic embrace', that the only solidarity shown has been with the banking and business community and that Gonzalez and his team have lost their socialist identity. It is a dialogue of the deaf.

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Popperfoto

Spanish student pondering the difference between Socialist riot police and Francoist riot police, outside the Ministry of Education on 18 March

At one level it is a problem of style. The commonest complaint levelled at Gonzalez is that he has become insensitive to his own rank and file and arrogant, that he has not only ceased to communicate but that he also stopped worrying about doing so. Gonzalez receives the likes of crooner Julio Iglesias and bullfighter El Cordobes at his Moncloa palace. He flabbergasted Spain when he used Franco's yacht for a summer cruise. Press conferences in the meantime are sufficiently rare to become media events. Even in happier times trade unionists were rarely seen having beer and sandwiches, *finos* and *tapas*, at the Moncloa's Bodeguilla (Gonzalez's wine cellar and den which has passed into national folklore) and now they are never there at all.

At another, more complex level the confrontation has to do with policy or, more exactly, with Gonzalez's own understanding of what government really entails. The prime minister's bedside books are *Don Quixote* (he identifies with Sancho Panza more than with the knight of the mournful countenance), the memoirs of Manuel Azaña, the anguished Liberal who was the president of the Spanish Republic during the Civil War and the poems of Antonio Machado, the poet-cum-popular philosopher of the 1898 generation who wrote: 'Little Spaniard coming into the world/May God protect you/One of the two Spains/Will freeze your heart.' Gonzalez talks about the pace of change. The UGT talks about the change of pace.

Gonzalez has every reason to be pleased with himself. Under his leadership the PSOE has become the governing party and the credits he has amassed during his premiership are considerable. Nobody can dispute the fact that since 1982 the military have taken a definitive backseat. The old debate about civilian supremacy belongs to the instant books that were published in the aftermath of the 1981 coup attempt. Gonzalez, through a spectacular *rapprochement* with President Mitterrand's France, broke through centuries of suspicion between the two neighbours and paved the way for membership of the EEC. Isolationism, the root cause of Spanish economic underdevelopment and political extremism, belonged, once again, to the history books. Membership of NATO was Gonzalez's toughest hurdle. The ill-explained U-turn he made over the Alliance and the damaging and divisive referendum staged in June 1986 is now water under the bridge. What remains is the genuine possibility of professionalising the armed forces. Gonzalez now has a good opportunity of significantly reducing US bases in Spain as a sop to the left.

Mountaineers

The final success chapter in the Gonzalez book concerns the economy. He has brought down inflation to single digits, built up record reserves, maintained a stable currency and forged a current account surplus. Foreign investors have moved into Spain like moths to a lamp. This is precisely where the divide with the UGT starts. Gonzalez and his team, meanwhile, cannot see what the fuss is about when they have so much to their credit.

The Spanish left stomached the austerity programme that got underway in 1982 and closed ranks behind the first ever PSOE government. Gonzalez's pace of change message had most recently been expressed in a 1979 party conference when he made his 'Sherpa' speech. There were those, he said, who tried to rush up the mountain, moving fast and not pausing for breath. Sherpas, he went on in his inimitable mix of passionate conviction and folksiness, made camps, moved slowly and got to the top. The priority, he concluded, was to create wealth because 'Socialism is not called upon to distribute scarcity'. Last year in the general elections Gonzalez was in an upbeat mood. The worst was over and the good times lay ahead. The PSOE had demonstrated it could manage an economic crisis and now it would manage growth with 'solidarity and a progressive spirit'. This was the starting pistol for UGT restiveness.

The fraternal union had, after all, endured the jibes of its rival union, the Communist-led Comisiones Obreras, throughout the 1982-86 period. The announcement in the autumn budget debate that an inflation-linked pay award guideline was still in force (the government is insisting on a ceiling of 5 per cent at a time when inflation is running at 6 per cent after an 8 per cent figure at the end of last year), the cuts in public investment and the realisation that industrial restructuring in the smokestack sectors was far from over was too much for the UGT. The Sherpa speech was seen as a smokescreen for managing capitalism far more effectively than the Spanish right had ever done.

A few years before he came to power, Gonzalez was aware of the contradictions that awaited him when he reached the top. He then went around saying that the 'historic destiny' of his generation of PSOE leaders was to ensure that democracy was consolidated. He then talked about future generations of the Spanish left that would question the nature of domesticated socialism and clamour for the real stuff. They were prophetic thoughts. Something of this lies at the centre of the present disputes and the dialogue of the deaf. □

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ARTS

ARCHITECTURE

The family mausoleum

Jules Lubbock

THE EPIDEMIC of architect-designed museums has been compared to the mediaeval craze for cathedrals and pilgrim-shrines — and tourists have been compared to pilgrims. Far more significant is the increasing practice of tacking onto the major 'shrine' the modern equivalent of chantries, or memorial chapels, to private individuals who wish their memory to be associated with an important collection of cultural relics. This has become the height of fashion in 'tombstones' for the very rich, ousting the earlier, more beneficial vogue for research foundations and Oxbridge colleges. Only a week after the opening of the Clore Gallery at the Tate housing J.M.W. Turner's bequest, the plans for the Sainsbury Wing of our National Gallery were announced at a press promo.

When I suggested to Jacob Rothschild, Chair of the Trustees, that, since theirs was the only major gallery already to display all its pictures, the extension must be regarded as the Sainsbury brothers' 'gravestone', as well as a beacon for private arts patronage (not for nothing does Mrs Thatcher personally vet all Trustees), I was regarded as both mad and bad. I proposed the alternative of naming it the Eastlake Wing in honour of the first Director, a great Victorian public servant who formed the core of what is now the world's finest collection of early Netherlandish, Italian and German painting (to be housed in the extension) and without whom there would be nothing for the Sainsburys to put their wing around. For £25m., the price of one masterpiece, the brothers are using the contributions of countless public benefactors. Since Rothschild claims that it was the Trustees who persuaded the brothers to overcome their customary reticence about their acts of charity and patronage, the Sainsburys should press the Trustees to change their minds and do the right thing by Eastlake.

Such patronage directly influences the architecture. These modern chantries must be splendid, architecturally individualistic and monumental. But in this case, because of the history of disastrous projects and royal displeasure, the facade could not conflict with its context. The choice of architect was difficult.

After such solemn and extended deliberations as are appropriate to choosing the designer of a dynastic mausoleum and national mini-monument — in whose success Rothschilds, donors, the Heir Apparent and the Prime Minister all had a stake — they alighted upon the American husband-and-wife team of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, authors of *Complexity and Contradiction* (1966), the first classic of 'post-modern' architectural theory which drew, paradoxically, upon the 'modernist' literary theory of Empson and Eliot. They, if anyone, could reconcile so conflicting a group of formalistic and social requirements.

Main staircase to the Sainsbury Wing: but shouldn't the people be climbing on their knees?

They have not disappointed. The entrance facade at 45° to the existing gallery quietly closes the corner of the square, but in a freaky fashion — using the, as it were, Eliotic device of quoting clusters of bunched-up pilasters from the main gallery which then peter out in a dying fall of classical fragments. Unfortunately the pair of pilasters which terminates the series, and appears to frame the entrance, in fact frames the place where the entrance would have been had it not been moved round the corner for practical reasons — an unintentional contradiction which might create difficulties.

The 'tombstone' is provided by an unbroken flight of stairs rising the full three stories, up which visitors will have to climb to the galleries. It evokes the Baroque splendour of Bernini's Scala Regia built to convey the aged Pope in comfortable ceremony from the Vatican to St Peter's. For us, the ceremony will consist of a long and wearisome climb with our eyes directed upwards to the giant Latin inscription cut in classical lettering into the Portland stone wall at the top, honouring the munificence of the donors, followed by a left turn to see a Renaissance altarpiece framed by a Doric arcade. The staircase will be visible from Trafalgar Square through a lean-to greenhouse, will be illuminated at night and has an appealing touch of classicising vulgarity which might appeal to those who wish to be seen as modern Medici.

Finally we reach the paintings themselves, hung mercifully in a quiet, conventional, low-lit suite of galleries, the detailing of which will echo the style of Brunelleschi, the Florentine architect who started the classical revival. But only a small proportion of the so-called Early Renaissance collection come from Florence, much originated

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in other Italian cities, where different styles predominated, and from Germany and the Netherlands, which were not classical but gothic. And there are important Italian gothic paintings. But the myth of Florence as the fount of Renaissance sustains the myth of the modern Medici: 'Where could you find a better patron?' I overheard Stuart Lipton, the property developer who advised the gallery, whisper ecstatically.

I am not rubbishing the architects, whose building is brilliantly devised and who candidly admitted to me that the complexities and contradictions of architecture are as much social as formal. But I, for one, would prefer no extension at all to being forced to perform, in climbing that staircase, so ridiculous and humiliating an act of homage to my family grocer. The Sainsburys have unostentatiously given much to the less glamorous arts, which is admirable; but this pompous form of classicising patronage — willed on them, it seems, by the Trustees — is out of character, and can only make them a laughing stock to those with an eye for mock heroic. Besides, there are disturbing political implications to the apotheosis of a business dynasty in a square which commemorates the heroes of Empire. □

CINEMA

A confederacy of dunces

Simon Cunliffe

Crimes of the Heart (15)
Odeon Haymarket
Almost You (15)
Cannon Tottenham Court Road; Metro

A RARE CHINK in the armour of publicity surrounding new cinema releases came to light recently on the television programme *Film '87*. An item from New York suggested that there was more to the current rash of stage play adaptations than a happy, coincidental collusion of creative talent — which is what that publicity would otherwise have us believe. Movies such as *Children of a Lesser God, 84 Charing Cross Road, Duet For One, Little Shop of Horrors* and the yet to be released *'night, Mother* are attracting investment from video companies in return for distribution rights.

It is not hard to understand why such companies are queuing up to finance such productions. They know roughly what they're getting for their money because the play in question has a track record. The character-dominated 'quality' product suits their market. With limited casts and restricted locations, the majority of which are interiors, the budgets are comparatively slight. In short, in the notoriously expensive and unpredictable business of movie investment, the adapted stage play represents a safe option.

Crimes of the Heart is unlikely to prove an exception. It is directed by Australian filmmaker Bruce Beresford and adapted by Beth Henley from her own Pulitzer Prize-winning play of the same name. It arrives cocooned in a cloud of glamour befitting the presence in the cast of three of Hollywood's current 'leading ladies': Diane Keaton, Sissy Spacek and Jessica Lange. Those for whom cinema is simply a cheaper form of theatre should not be disappointed.

But cinema can be a good deal more than theatre on film; more than merely pointing a camera at a gifted actress in the process of coaxing a memorable character through the intricacies of a delicately scripted plot. It is a good 35 years since French critics and filmmakers like Bazin, Truffaut, Rohmer and Rivette began proposing their *politique des auteurs*, with its emphasis on the creativity of the director, on his style and *mise en scène*. Films like *Crimes of the Heart* persuade us that their concerns had considerable validity: at times during its cosy, almost self-referential complacency, admiration is curtailed and a longing sets in for at least a few jarring moments of the inspired, if disturbing, cinematic exuberance of a movie like *Blue Velvet*.

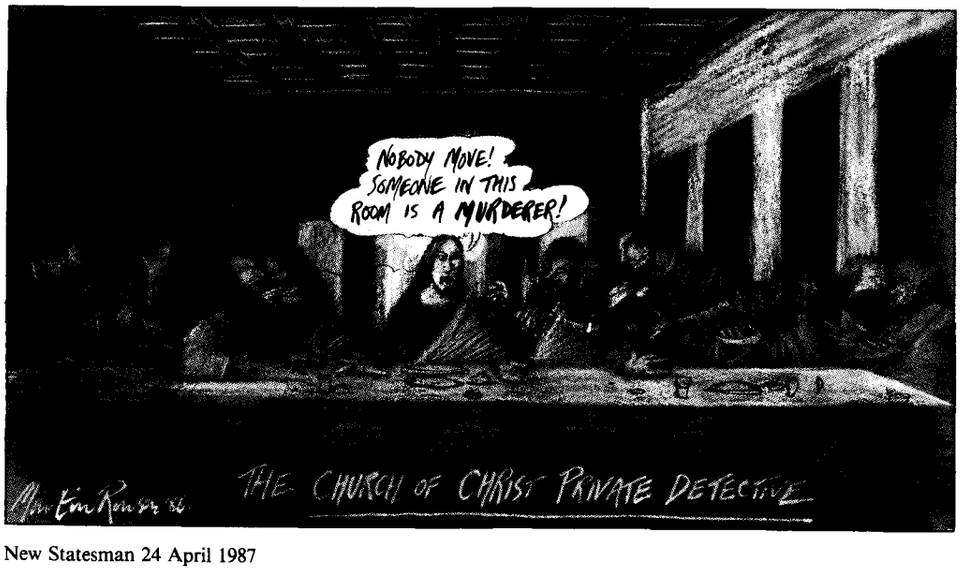
The reunion of the MaGrath sisters in their hometown of Hazelhurst, Mississippi, is occasioned by the arrest of the youngest, Babe (Spacek), for the attempted murder of her wealthy husband. 'I didn't like his stinking looks,' she proclaims to anyone who cares to ask. Lenny (Keaton), the eldest, fated it seems to a life of servitude looking after Grandpa and worrying about her shrunken ovary, arrives to show solidarity. She is soon joined by the glamorous Meg (Lange) whose dreams of Hollywood stardom have been broken on the back of a nervous collapse and who now eats humble pie on the production line of a dog food factory. Not that she's about to let on. The aura of precarious sanity about the lives and behaviour of the three sisters is presided over by the memory of Ma MaGrath who elected to take her own life, and that of the family's old yellow cat, by hanging. If old Ma MaGrath was generally considered to have been out-to-lunch, it is soon apparent that each of her daughters have spent time dining at the same table.

Henley's screenplay, excellently illustrated by the star cast, is not so much a whodunnit as a very circuitous why-did-she-do-it? In fact its real business is the relationships between the three sisters. Eddying currents of jealousy, small-mindedness, self-doubt, affection and exuberance ripple through their moods as each, with the sometimes unsolicited aid of her sisters, attempts to come to terms with her own life.

Given such potential for high-octane performance it is perhaps not surprising that Beresford's direction takes second fiddle. It only ever really comes into its own when he manages to wrest the action away from the MaGrath mansion. There is one beautifully realised scene between Meg and an old suitor, Doc (Sam Shepard). The pair go driving. They spend a night on the edge of a lake drinking, dancing, carousing, first under the light of the moon, then against the orange glow of a spectacular sunrise. If there was ever a scene in a movie made to accompany Cole Porter's 'Don't Fence Me In', this is it. Here it is performed by Willie Nelson and Leon Russell.

If there is a certain familiarity about *Crimes of the Heart* it is in its 'Southern-ness'. It often seems that North American culture has colonised its own deep South, appropriated it as bargain basement of the faintly absurd, a junkyard of lovable if somewhat unhinged human eccentricity; a mythicised, timeless land peopled by an assortment of the nation's quaint but mostly forgotten relatives. Lenny, Meg and Babe fit the bill perfectly; even Doc, with his awkward hobble, is something of a freak. Bruce Beresford has made three films in the States. *Tender Mercies*, his first, was also set in the South. He obviously feels at home there.

Billed as an 'unconventional comedy' *Crimes of the Heart* is much more a comedy of manners than an hysterically amusing film. It shares this trait with the low-budget, independent feature **Almost You**. Set in New York, this occupies territory a galaxy removed from Mississippi: Sub-Yuppieville, with its performance artists and dinner-party discussions on the art of seduction. In a world in which shared ownership of a dog counts as a greater commitment than marriage, Griffin Dunne plays the restless young man who succumbs to the seven-year itch and attempts to opt out of his comfortable life. It is pleasant enough but, like *Crimes of the Heart*, could do with some iron in its soul. □



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WORK IN PROGRESS

They could have danced all day

Naseem Khan

YOU COULD SEE DOUBT flickering over the little kids' faces. There they had been, snoozing away in the rest room in the row of neat little beds, when, one by one, they had woken up and thought, much as usual, lavatory. But then, opening the door into the main body of the Rainbow Nursery's portakabin, what had they found? Loads of grown-ups (well, three to be precise) fooling around: rolling on the floor, banging drums and pianos, encouraging the older kids to run around and wiggle their bottoms.

Well, really. Mostly the little kids decided to ignore this untoward behaviour. They stomped toiletwards, knickers off, looking neither right nor left for fear that one of these odd people might jump on them, get them to join in maybe.

By the time they re-emerged, caution had melted. Some sidled up, some threw themselves into the melée. On the outskirts, the teachers and helpers watched proprietorially. Jazzy music and a multiple train of children came hissing and chugging together round the nursery; then came a sun, rain, tigers and, when the music stopped, a running game hopping into hoops.

After a while, when the time seemed right, the three dancers (for so the grown-ups were) moved into the second phase: the story. Once, they told the now attentive 22, there were some sad people who had forgotten how to dance. So they all went on a journey (and off they all went) to find someone to help them — over narrow, high ledges (below which, said spikey-haired Nigel, were poisoned hippos, snails, slugs and, yes, exploding hedgehogs — none of which worried the children), through a lake of boiling custard, over a beach of red hot pebbles ('Ooh, ow! Ooh-ooh-ow!' they leapt about cheerfully). When they found a rather nasty old woman (Lise), several were not quite sure their journey had been worthwhile, but it was not a serious worry and, anyhow, was swiftly followed by a quiet end to it all, with the children lying relaxed on the floor.

The event was one of the first undertaken by Green Candle, a new community dance group with a small ambit but large ambitions. Started this year by Fergus Early, it is the logical result of a basic conviction: 'I start from the premise that dance is everyone's birthright, but that many are deprived of this right.' Life-enhancing, healing, celebratory, joyful, dance is 'a model of life as it could be. So, without dance, an important part of life is missing.'

Community dance in itself is no new thing. The numbers of dance animateurs (defined by the Arts Council's ex-Literature Director, in his sour memoirs, as 'people . . . funded by the Arts Council to bully the natives into dancing') have increased. Greater London Art's third long course on Community Dance, held recently, could have filled its places twice over. Community dance centres such as those at Leeds, Cardiff, etc. continue to develop, while local authorities (or some of them) appoint community dance workers. It is the coming thing.

Community dance companies, however, are few and far between: Ludus in the north, the Kosh and, now, Green Candle. And what distinguishes Green Candle is its insistent identification with a particular area: the East End in general; Newham, Hackney and Tower Hamlets in particular.

It is in this comparatively small patch that Early and his three dancers hope to prove the value of a resident borough dance company. Partly because of Hackney's own prioritising of under-5s, the company started off working with toddlers. They have also, however, devised a more formal show for primary schools, offered with workshop activities. A rumbustious Irish tale *Oonagh and Finn*, it concerns the fooling of an ogre. After the young will come the boroughs' elderly and a show based on the memories of three different residents.

Performances, however, are the least of Green Candle's work. Their function is broad: to run residencies, to set up workshops and in-service courses, to organise and co-ordinate community dance events, to provide an advisory service. They are not, in short, fly-by-nights. They are there to be part of the life of the area.

Or such is the wish. Ironically — despite favourable local reactions — it is possible that the criteria of arts funding could make it impossible for them to play the very role for which Green Candle was created. First, the boroughs. All three Green Candle boroughs are rate-capped. (Life would have been easier in Westminster or Kensington.) Tower Hamlets, in addition, has just cut its art funding to shreds. So, while money for projects could be forthcoming, there is no chance of overheads and running costs being met. Greater London Arts — which itself has money problems — has provided just over half of the Phase I funding. The balance has mainly come from the Arts Council whose criterion is a national presence — in other words, touring away from their base. Possible alternative sources like Gulbenkian (long sympathetic to dance) will tend to want matching funds from boroughs.

The danger therefore is that the facts of economic life could force Green Candle away from a firm local base into the more footloose come-and-go patterns of other companies. 'My grandest aim for the company is that it should be part of bringing dance back to a central place in our culture,' said Early. It would be an indictment of our funding structures if he never really got the chance to try. □

MUSIC

Vox pop

Simon Reynolds

WRITING ON POP is still overwhelmingly bound to Meaning. So there's either an EngLit-style exegesis of the text (in search of human truth) or a weighing of the political and social ramifications of music cultures (hallucinating radicalism, for instance, or resistance in black dance musics). In this struggle to locate what's being said, what's taken for granted is the transparency of the *voice* as a medium for communication. Back in the days before the *NME* went all stodgy, a couple of treatises aiming to shift this imbalance were written: by Barney Hoskyns, following through Barthes' ideas about the extra-linguistic properties of 'the grain of the voice', and by Ian Penman, taking his cue from Kristeva and proposing 'a choreography of the voice'. But, by and large, critics still shy from the fascination and force of the voice, its materiality and gait, its opacity and truancy from monogamous meaning. Which means that there are certain performers who leave them completely at a loss.

Take **Throwing Muses**, a young, three-quarters female band from Newport, Rhode Island, whose debut LP spurred critics to rare heights of hyperbolic imprecision. Now there's a new EP, *Chains Changed,* out on 4AD. What the band plays is a kind of traumatised folk-punk, songs that are complex, contrary, but immediately intoxicating. The words are a tangle of dream imagery, shards of pain and dislocation, but what freezes you in your tracks and makes you *want* to unravel them is the voice that flings them out. Erratic and unique, without ever seeming forced or mannered, this is a voice that comes as a scalding gust of rage, or hushed by the chill of dread, a voice that seems both overbearingly intimate and yet quite *other*. It belongs to a woman called Kristin Hersh.

The best way to get to Throwing Muses is by comparison with **The Smiths** — who also have a new single out. 'Sheila Take A Bow' (Rough Trade). Throwing Muses and The Smiths both work with and within adolescence's flux of doubt and possibility, sexual confusion, the conflict between claustrophobia and agoraphobia. But what The Smiths' Morrissey does is to take this experience and convert it into insights, funny/sad couplets, a wisdom we can draw comfort from. With The Smiths it's possible to say 'what they're all about', to place and manage them. But it's impossible to synopsise Throwing Muses, have something stand in for the experience. Listening to Kristin is the closest to 'presence' you can get in pop. The way she chews and chokes on language, the way the text is stressed to the point of buckling by the pressure of blocked drives bursting free — this is as close to the heart of Throwing Muses as journalism can get. What they're about is the incoherence of pain: about language and the self falling apart, failing to cope. It's an aesthetic of irresolution, whereas The Smiths invest misery with poise, ennoble it. The difference is between *commenting* and *embodying*. Kristin's work corresponds to Julia Kristeva's idea of the subject-in-process; the identity continuously unfixing and

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remaking itself in an infinite process of therapy through art and fantasy. I *love* The Smiths and, as a pop institution, they're more powerful than Throwing Muses will ever be. But Throwing Muses' is the more powerful art: with Morrissey you sense that for all his complaint he's comforted by the warmth of his own narcissism. But Kristin's voice is the *inconsolable* sound of the soul struggling with the insoluble.

Today, the Soul Voice has become a tyranny; singers like Mick Hucknall and Tina Turner are the modern equivalent of the heavy metal soloist, praising their own mastery of emotive technique. **Prince**, a butterfly next to these bison, takes the process one step further towards total indecency — this is a voice that *caresses* itself, preens and pirouettes in a mirror, for its own delectation. It's like watching someone else watching themselves masturbate. Of course, it's a voice that has nothing to say: apart from the 'concern' of the single 'Sign O' the Times', a 'What's Goin' On' for the Eighties and the kind of conceit only Prince has the sheer funk to pull off. The new double LP is a retreat from the world, almost entirely about 'doin' it' — fast or slow, but mostly *weird*. Even here, you feel that Prince is turning on by himself. *Sign O' The Times* (WEA) is the latest monument to Prince's almost ruinous vanity, a giddy, grotesque banquet of sound, a hysterical concatenation of styles (funk, psychedelia, electro-futurism, schmaltz, Latin, jazz-fusion, Hendrix, Sun Ra), sometimes within the same song. Prince is the pop equivalent of Huysmans' Des Esseintes, the reclusive aristocrat who dedicated his life to the exploration of ever more refined and unnatural means of stimulating his senses and intellect. This LP makes me think of Des Esseintes' symphony of perfumes: exquisite, overpowering, nauseous. The record proves that, for all the striving and rhetoric of 'alternative' music, the mainstream throws up its own madness and strangeness, its own avant-garde shapes. □

THEATRE

Look round in anger

Paul Allen

Fashion
DOUG LUCIE *The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon*

THERE IS A HARD brilliance about Doug Lucie's writing that makes you hope for and eventually demand the best. His plays are funnier than those of Howard Brenton and David Hare, more jaggedly and provocatively lifelike than David Edgar's and less didactic than Trevor Griffiths'. What he still lacks in stagecraft can be learned. But what keeps him, in his early thirties, from joining those elder peers or the likes of Caryl Churchill as a major public playwright is something that has to be felt. *Fashion* shows him moving towards it but still falling some way short.

It is set in the hi-tech, coldly gleaming office of a hard-driving advertising boss, a man who 'makes things happen' but never goes home. What powers Paul Cash (Brian Cox) seems at first to be simple lust for money and success but is shown later to be somewhat more complex. He's after a big account, the campaign for the Conservative Party at the next General Election. To get it he hires a has-been drunk of a film director (Alun Armstrong) and a former Labour MP who has become a television presenter: actor Clive Russell wears the carefully organised, blond locks of Robert Kilroy-Silk but seems to have made the political journey (and to phrase the orotund questions) of Brian Walden.

Since the film director is a stubbornly persistent socialist and Lucie's other characters include a prospective candidate who's a clone of Herself, a cynical Tory whip who is tired of Herself and a young black (well, black-ish in the person of Akim Mogaji) creative advertising person who is bored with politics, Lucie has pulled off the clever trick of using the right as a canvas for painting a picture of the left.

But there's more. Cash, dragging his old director pal back from oblivion, is also sleeping with the man's wife. Further, he reminds us, he was patronised and humiliated by the arty left in the days of the liberal consensus. If, as someone says, 'advertising is the revenge of business upon culture' then this is also a revenge play, that of the moneyman upon the artist. But, before we get carried away with the idea that this is the metaphor for our times, Lucie also makes the ad-man say that he wants to be loved — and, in desperation, he hires a truculent Scottish rent-boy to do it.

The sulphurous stew that these characters get themselves into doesn't so much titillate the tastebuds as tear out your tongue and trample on it. Lucie's dialogue is combative and funny, his sense of irony savage — the Tory whip says he had money in the left-wing director's best film: '*A Back Street Life* bought us our villa in Greece'. He uses the ad-man's passion for video-screens and ansaphones not as comic trimmings but the stuff of de-humanisation.

What he confronts better than anyone I have seen so far is the fact that politics are perceived as simply boring (or puritanical: nearly the same thing) by a whole generation and at least raises the issue of whether both Thatcherism and the stereotypical left-wing activists are symptoms or causes of this. But there is no comfort elsewhere: when the director, Stuart Clarke, begins to talk warmly for once, he gets the response from the suave young black man (who seems to owe something to the playwright Hanif Kureishi) that hearing a Sixties has-been baring his soul 'makes me come over all lethargic.'

The great shortcoming is that the moral and emotional disgust is all. Lucie is a satirist in the far from disgraceful tradition of Ben Jonson, Swift and perhaps Howard Barker. His anger at vices from greed to woolly-mindedness fires him so completely that there is no room to show whatever state of humanity, if any, he aspires to.

Theatrically this leaves us with a gripping play but an incomplete one. I hope I am not asking him to be sentimental, but I need more emotional truth than the simple and swiftly forgotten statement 'It hurts' when the director is told of his wife's affair. Further, Lucie has created a series of parts which depend on good actors to make them live rather than furnishing good actors with rich opportunities to do more. In the end he defeats himself, because he gives a long and crucial speech to the unfaithful wife which, while drunkenly affirming socialism as an ideal, rounds violently on all political practitioners present for 'playing boys' games'. Even that fine actress Estelle Kohler can't make this work because there is no genuine emotional core to it.

This makes the other performances in Nick Hamm's production for the RSC all the more stunning, those of Brian Cox and Alun Armstrong especially. The fundamental thrust of the play, that politics has become a matter of selling rather than debate, survives largely on their conviction.

Lucie's contemporary John Godber is exploring the further commercial possibilities of his interest in nightclubs at Leicester. Trevor Griffiths has reworked *Comedians* for an all-women cast in Liverpool, making greater sense of the revulsion from sexist jokes but a no more persuasive case than the male version that comedy might be an agent for radical popular change — the comic turn at the end is still more arts centre 'performance' than an act for the clubs. We need Lucie. □

TELEVISION

Head over heal

Hugo Williams

IT WAS EASY to believe that psychiatrist Dr William Sargant was once a *bête noir*. The subject of **The Unquiet Mind** (C4), two jolly Sunday afternoon programmes on the 'physicalist' approach to mental illness — drugs, shock treatment and surgical operations — Dr Sargant was reviled in the Thirties and, today, his ideas are reviled even more. Many of his practices, proved effective on the wards, are long forgotten or discredited, such radical forms of treatment being anathema to the followers of R. D. Laing.

Television, too, has compounded the horror of mental patients drugged insensible, shaking, half-paralysed and incontinent. Documentary programmes exposing the evils of psychiatry are today a traditional sub-genre of the Frankenstein movie; lobotomies and ECT have crossed over and are now the exclusive preserve of fictional black-hats and heavies. Dr Sargant mourned the passing of such practical aids. He deplored the current practice of sitting round in endless groups talking, when a quick lobotomy could relieve so much suffering. 'People can be incapacitated by anxiety for 20 years . . .'

Dr Sargant is a rather sad old man whose tongue emerges from his dry mouth as he searches for the right word to explain what only experience can explain. In the Thirties, his profession was dominated by psychoanalysis, as it is again today. But Sargant was concerned only with human suffering and always believed that the end results justified the means. During the war he developed various forms of drug-aided therapy to relieve severe battle-shock, forcing patients to re-live their worst nightmares — burning alive in a tank, say — in order to rescue them from the source of their incapacity. Oddly, the idea seems Freudian in origin. He also invented a modified form of lobotomy, the leucotomy, which he regretted had not been used to help more people permanently incarcerated to lead normal lives on the outside. He lifted two stiff index fingers to his temples to illustrate the 'minor' and 'simple' nature of the

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operation.

Like anyone else, I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy but, given the choice of appearing as myself in one of television's charming latter-day visit-to-Bedlam sideshows, or sitting at home and watching it as someone else, I'd chose to be someone else.

There is a depressed maid in **District Nurse** (BBC1) who leaves the choice up to her master and emerges bandaged and smiling, but then she only had a lump. I wonder who Juliet Ace is. Just another of the vast, doomed army who help keep us supplied with a 24-hour fictional world? Or a writer able to bank her time and break the equation that screws her to the next rates bill, the next episode of *Crossroads*? Her name, at least, is a winner. From her contribution to *District Nurse* last week, with its Ibsenish undertones, anything should be possible. But perhaps a given cast of characters makes the work easier. God knows, they're fruity enough: the series might have been entitled *All Humans Great and Small.* A family practice set in Wales in the Thirties, it differs from the vet series only in its accents and the addition of the eponymous female, the supremely reassuring Nerys Hughes, who is surely a nurse in real life as well as in the motherly, meddling, utterly convincing part of Megan Roberts.

The week before, in an equally good episode by Jane Hollowood, Megan was still working privately, waiting for her interview for District Nurse. 'Just because it's private nursing doesn't mean it isn't worthwhile,' Hollowood has her say, as if to speak out for those nurses who are strictured by the media for going to America rather than starve and freeze for love of their profession. Megan forgot her interview, being too busy trying to reconcile a son with his syphilitic father, whose one-night wartime weakness had killed his mother. The man had a big swelling on his chest. 'It pulsates,' said Megan with alarm and fascination in her eyes. 'If it bursts,' said Dr Isaacs, 'he could go immediately.'

The following week's theme also happened to be venereal: a pre-sequence of the cast buying local toiletries at a country fair should have told us that it was not the water supply or Madame Rosita May's two 'nieces' that were responsible for the itch that was going round Glanmôr. The false alarm was a neat device for revealing unlikely liaisons and betrayals in the community. The only one unaffected is an old sea salt who never washes. This was all comic, if painful, relief. But there was a parallel mystery of a brilliant and beautiful student from one of the hill farms, unable to work or eat and wasting away for reasons possibly related to the other part of the plot. As it turned out, her case was more serious. Ever since her mother died when she was eight her father had been reading her a chapter of the bible every night, then telling her to close her eyes. She was terrified that in her absence from home the dreaded responsibility, which she had nevertheless learnt to want, would fall to her younger sister. Unjustified fear: her sister is not the submissive type. Nurse Megan wins her confidence and makes her confront the old man. She throws his bible in the sea.

The series is dressed as pulp, but is actually finely crafted and funny, though I suppose it depends on who's writing each episode. Dr Emlyn Isaacs plays actor Freddie Jones to perfection. □

Books

COMICS

Strip shows

Roz Kaveney

Book sales may be falling but comics have never been so popular, or so sophisticated

SOME PEOPLE START off not quite sure how you read them: left to right, or top to bottom? Well, one says, usually left to right but not always, and tries to explain that part of the point of comics is that their visual conventions are always provisional, can be played around with, broken and recast. Once they have got past that, and the fragmentation of time, and the games with splitscreen and multiple viewpoint, there remains the problem that much of what is actually *available* in a form so ripe for experiment is riddled with stale conventions of plot and material.

The dictates of the market, and nostalgia for adolescent delight among most of those professionally concerned with comics, mean that most current examples are still obsessed with masked crimefighters and superheroes. Fine as Alan Moon's *Watchmen* and other subversive experiments within these conventions can be, most mass-market comics suffer under editors who demand at least three pages of hand-to-hand combat in every issue and no character whose basic personality traits need more than 24 words to describe. What, then, *does* one say to someone who accepts that comic book art has the potential to be worthwhile, but who won't waste time on neurotics in dominos, cloaks and leotards?

In the first place, one might point them in the direction of the reissues of classic American, and occasionally British, newspaper strips of the 1940s and '50s. The ethos of moral-superiority-with-good-right-hook was as prevalent then, and the politics, sexual and geo-, often even worse than you might imagine. But strips like Milton Caniff's *Steven Canyon*, Will Eisner's *Spirit* and Sydney

While Maggie suffers from bisexual angst in California (above), Corto Maltese rolls a Gitane along his *rigide* upper lip (below)

Jordan's *Jeff Hawke* had other virtues, all of them concerned with that indefinable trace of the artist's personality — harder to maintain while working for a large organisation like Marvel Comics — which we call style. Caniff's work has major flaws in its use of off-key farce and gungho summonings to the American Flag, but his sense of composition means that his talking heads are always set against backdrops that to an astonishing degree have the texture of real and inhabited environments. Eisner's work always transcended his masked crimefighter material because of the fluidity of his characters' movement and the narrow and successful line he walked between stylised grace and sheer caricature; more recent and self-indulgent work like *New York* carries to extremes both his sentimentality and pat plots and the sensuous, grey fogginess of his cityscapes. Jordan's underrated work started as a newspaper answer to

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Hampson's *Dan Dare* , but its skilful combination, in his alien interlopers, of dark mystery and ineffectual taste for farcical intrigue gave it a flavour all his own.

But of the popular adventure material currently available perhaps the most impressive is the Italian-based Hugo Pratt's endlessly fertile *Corto Maltese* strip (Casterman). His visual style is sparse and his characters' bodies often little more than blobs, though blobs demonically alive with physical energy; their faces are static and sardonic, surveying each other, and probably their readers, with the same boundless cynicism that, with commensurate idealism, pervades the plots. Corto Maltese is an adventurer in the first quarter of the present century, wandering the further reaches of Empire and the war-torn steppes of Central Asia with an eye somewhat to the main chance and a cigarette drooping from a haughty upper lip. Yet he often leaves his current treasure hunt to side with the oppressed and often turns out, in the nick of time, to be on old-friend terms with famous revolutionaries. His relationships with female characters like the tommygun-toting vamp Venexiana are laidback to the point of being icy. As scriptwriter, Pratt worked on what must be one of the most physically gorgeous of all graphic novels, Manara's *Indian Summer*, with its tale of escalating vengeance between settlers and Native Americans punctuated with scenes of the natural world around the slaughter just getting on being beautiful.

A widely held theory regards the vast range of French *bandes dessinées* as the best thing that ever happened to comics. While one can discount acres of fetishistic pornothrillers, graphic novels like Boucq's *La femme du magicien* and Bourgeon's *Les yeux d'étain de la ville glauque* have a real visual beauty that compliments their slightly fey, surreal plots, and transcends a visual tendency to Arthur Rackhamry. But the forthcoming graphic novel which deserves most attention is Gaiman and McKean's *Violent Cases*, an amiably nightmarish exercise in memory in which an adult narrator recalls treatment when a child from Al Capone's former osteopath. The sequence in which the old man reminisces about Al's massacres while children play musical chairs next door is wincemaking in its ironies, and the way that the victims' blood, spattered across the drawings, modulates into the roses at their funeral on the next page is one of the most effective of visual trickeries. It is, however, typical of the industry that McKean evolved his idiosyncratic, jagged style while working on covers for *Judge Dredd* collections.

The most impressively written comics currently appearing, though their artwork is only effective because kept simple, are the two running strips produced by the Hernandez Brothers in *Love and Rockets* (Fantagraphics Books). Gilbert Hernandez' *Heartbreak Soup* deals with the remote Mexican town of Palomar over the last 20 years and puts us through the switchback ride of multiple narrators, none of them wholly truthful. In one issue, Carmen will talk of her problems with her husband Hercules' literary pretensions and in another he will talk of her rages; both minimise their own infidelities while complaining of the other's. Gilbert Hernandez' work has that cynicism about motives which is attractive because once it has underlined human frailties it shows them as forgiveable. Jaime Hernandez' *Locas* started off with fantastic elements — but has gradually evolved into a more or less realistic portrayal of a group of punks and punkettes in a Californian barrio. Bisexual Maggie worries about her weight and what her lover Hopey is doing while on tour with her band, female wrestlers lose custody of their children and old men mutter in Spanish about where it will all end. And Speedy, a hatchet-faced young man, looking like a gaunter version of Jaime Hernadez' himself, broods and observes. *Locas* is about as far as you can get from superheroes these days. It has a photographic simplicity of emotion and a refusal to hurry plot into happening that makes it and *Heartbreak Soup* perhaps the most quietly radical of comics. The perfect comics, in fact, for people who are not sure they like them. □

All comics mentioned are available from Forbidden Planet and other specialist shops.

Caravanserai

Russell Lucas

Sharking up the pike, her valentino
In his Chevrolet coupé, mirror checks
white camels jigging through the ochre dust,
dancing horses, spooked by bleeding flanks,
and trundling buffalo-carts, bearing bales
of silk, rugs, samovars of spicy tea;
he, half-remembers smells of sherbet, musk
pissoir-sweet, like cut jackfruit on the turn.

Past O'Halligan's neon-lit café,
the dancing girls, crying, footsore and spent,
jingling after their sweating, ragged men
and thin, wolfish dogs, snapping mad at ghosts,
tumulting through the Hotel Aqua Ritz,
mesmerised by mirrors, emerald fronds,
pink Wiltons, Mondrians, transparent lifts.

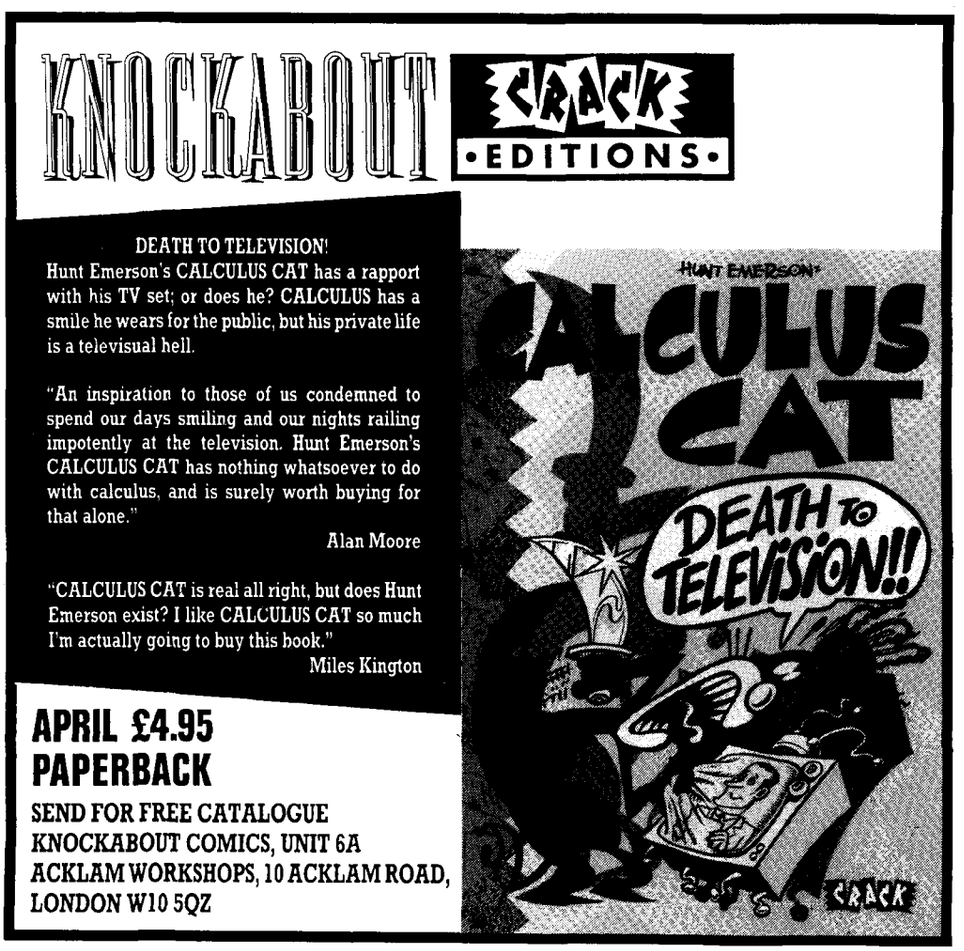
Up in the Powder Room, Miss Mamie Brinks,
parts long, lean, model legs across the can,
passing enough water to tilt the earth,
one ten billion billionth of one degree
sunwards, to warm her Sheik of Araby,
and greet the coming of his caravan.

SCIENCE FICTION

Lost in space

Josephine Saxton

SCIENCE FICTION FANS and writers all have one quality in common, whether they seek excellence or indulge in the sensational: they secretly feel to be what Colin Wilson epitomised as The Outsider — that they're special, years ahead of their time, in the know about things which most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can barely comprehend. That works of sf often do prove to be prophetic and show true insight into the state of things — for example, ecology — serves to heighten the excitement generated whenever a few hundred of these singular souls gather together at sf conventions.

The imagination reaches pinnacles in science fiction, sometimes ludicruous, sometimes acutely true, and all this is excellent fun for everyone except the reviewer, who, before films and videos and toys proliferated, often tried to assess the stories as literature. The genre began that way, after all, before the label 'scientific romance' started off a series of crippling definitions. Reading most of the current books offered gives me a feeling of deep irrelevancy; it will not matter if I treat them as novels, applying the same standards, and I feel certain that whatever literary miracles I may occasionally dredge up out of the dreck, the dreck itself is supreme, making millions. Sad. Hardly any use at all to destroy book after book with witty comments because, like cut flatworms, the wretched things just proliferate, with new heads and tails. Not a great deal of use to shine light upon the few good works because, like all other books now, if they do not sell rapidly then back to the warehouse they go.

Nevertheless, some enduring works are being brought out again, by Penguin in their Classic Science Fiction series. Reminding myself that it is not only in sf that rubbish makes millions, and that few are worth the paper they are printed on, I took a good second look at a few of these 'classics'. Other recent series of 'classics' were merely earlier works and not all worth raking out. I was encouraged; if people will still read **Last and First Men** by Olaf Stapledon (£3.95) then all is not lost, some standards remain. Though not an adventure with characters, his future history is still a riveting read with a great deal of nourishment and not a few monitory ideas which we would have done well to take note of when it was first published, in 1930. Similarly, **Land Under England** by Joseph O'Neill (£3.95), which I had never heard of, is an inspired allegory on the nature of totalitarianism, a theme which in less skilled hands has since often been turned into regurgitated pabulum. O'Neill writes in elegant prose, never numbing by overstating horror and creating a completely convincing alternate world from the point of view of one who, should he reveal his discoveries, will be deemed insane. But The Outsider triumphs, and here without Gothic excesses; compare his fight scenes with the average ray-blasting fantasy and note how effective is restraint.

Also in this series is Wells, with **The First Men in the Moon** (£3.50), still great fun and no dimmer for the more garish lights which followed, and **Flatland** by Edwin A. Abbott, first published in 1884 and 'in this edition' in 1952, here at £2.50 for not very much in volume, but surely a uniquely strange work. Its cover states: 'A capricious and delicious mathematical fantasy of life in a sunless, shadowless, two-dimensional country.' *Delicious*?! It is bleak, cruel, nightmarish in the way *Alice* is, and heartlessly funny, especially about women, who here are seen as deadly needles in a place where males are various shapes. The Outsider here also will be found insane, should he blab his discoveries about further dimensions. Weird, arid, instructive, and painful for a female to read; such books make me feel outside The Outsider, the fate of many females within the boundaries of sf in general where, until recently, the female point of view was rarely considered with anything other than condescension. We Outsiders still get 'charming', 'beautiful', 'amusing' to describe our work in histories of sf, unless we have been very tough about the truth and then we are 'hysterical and bitter'. Things have changed, but not much.

The Man in the High Castle by Philip K. Dick at £3.95 is a surprising inclusion as a classic; I remember the furore when it first appeared in 1962. Not only did nobody seem to understand it, but those who did have inklings either adored or detested the work. I think this was because it is not a science fiction story at all, but a philosophical work of some depth concerning possible alternate worlds (it is a 'what if the Nazis' story, to be succint — plus the I Ching), and many fans had never read a real novel up to that time. Small wonder they were shocked and puzzled, as are some fans today when I offer Lawrence Durrell as an alternative to vapid space. As well offer an apple to a heroin addict, for it is clear that most sf now is junk to feed an addiction; once that part of the mind is opened which deals with the amazing-which-might-be-about-to-happen, the poor old here and now will never be quite the same. Stronger and weirder doses of the astounding are needed, and bigger doses too — see how trilogies sell — and quality of writing or the form of the work seem like ghosts from some elitist world populated by literati, some of them *female*.

Nevertheless, true Outsiders do not relent or despair, and I am looking among recent work for some writing of excellence. It must be there, the genre did not cease to develop after the early writers had been through the basic ideas, nor did the New Wave leave only wet sand. But, reading these aforementioned works, it certainly feels as if those were the sad case.

Of 11 other books which reached my desk, only one could be compared with the 'Classics' and emerge favourably; **Evil Water** by Ian Watson, (Gollancz, £10.95) contains excellently handled stories which the author can be proud of, and which some day deserve to be called Classic themselves; a welcome relief from eschatology, scatology, and the merely scatty. □

SALVADOR

Too little, too soon

Jane Dibblin

They Won't Take Me Alive
CLARIBEL ALEGRIA trans. AMANDA HOPKINSON
Women's Press £3.95

IT IS HARD to talk of the freshly dead with anything but reverence. Harder still not to deify someone who has died young and was killed for the sake of their beliefs.

On 17 January 1981 Ana María Castillo Rivas was gunned down by plainclothes Salvadorean security forces as she tried to make a crucial arms drop. She was 31 years old and had a daughter of 13 months. Born into a comfortable, liberal family, she left them to join the guerillas of the Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), becoming *Companera* Eugenia, in the high command of the San Salvador front, head of the supply section during the general offensive of 1981. To write *They Won't Take Me Alive* Claribel Alegría interviewed Eugenia's friends, sisters and husband. The result is at times stiff with political jargon, often exasperating, nevertheless deeply moving.

Through the interviews Eugenia emerges as near perfect; tireless, never complaining, a woman whose political commitment and human understanding went from strength to strength. There's no doubt that she was a remarkable woman, impassioned yet meticulous. But that can't be her whole story. I want to know more. How did she cope with living underground, with carrying on an intensely caring relationship with her husband Javier when they were often separated and always anticipating the death of the other? How did she resolve what must have been an acute dilemma when she decided to have a baby and raise her with the guerillas in hiding?

I need to know not out of voyeurism but because otherwise Eugenia and her *companeros* become sanctified heroes, out of reach of mere mortal readers. Eugenia's story could be an inspiration but only if it builds a bridge with the reader, passing on some of her hard-won wisdom. *I... Rigoberta Menchu* and *Let Me Speak**, the first the story of an Indian woman in Guatemala, the second that of a woman from a Bolivian tin mine, are more successful in this: their humour, their fears and sadnesses make their personal sacrifices seem more possible.

The difference is that these women were still alive to tell their own histories and those of their communities. Could Alegría have written a different book only a year after Eugenia's death? I attended the funeral in Managua of an *internationalista*, a young doctor killed by the Contras. The Europeans and Americans were visibly shocked and shaken. His Nicaraguan friends, including his wife, stood, tears streaming down their faces, fists raised, shouting their defiance in cracked voices, *patria libre o morir! no pasaran!* On every other page of *They Won't Take Me Alive* Eugenia loses another *companera*, another friend is captured and tortured. How else can the surviving Salvadoreans meet those deaths but by militancy, by translating their grief into new determination?

As it is, we get tantalising glimpses into what Eugenia might have had to say for herself.

> She started carrying out a large number of armed operations with an extraordinary serenity. Serenity doesn't imply a lack of fear. We talked this over together and she told me: 'Anyone who tells you he isn't afraid is telling lies. How could you not live in fear? The point is to overcome it.'

And, at the end, quite suddenly, there are three letters from Eugenia to Javier which she wrote just before she died, and some insights which breathe life into the memory of her: that she sang constantly to keep up everyone's spirits — completely out of tune — and that she was so preoccupied she wrote off countless cars out of absentmindedness.

There is also an excellent historical preface by Amanda Hopkinson and, after the recent spate of

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films mediating the war in Central America through the eyes of American journalists (*Under Fire, Salvador . . .*), it's a relief to see the struggle documented from the inside. For all its lapses into stiffness this is a book which challenges and which lingers in the mind. □

*I . . . Rigoberta Menchu, *edited by Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, is published by Verso at £4.95;* Let Me Speak, *by Domitila Barrios de Chungara, is currently out of print.*

FIRST NOVELS

Past imperfect

Boyd Tonkin

Trust
MARY FLANAGAN *Bloomsbury* £10.95
Dessa Rose
SHERLEY ANNE WILLIAMS *Macmillan* £9.95
Train to Doringbult
MARGUERITE POLAND *Bodley Head* £9.95
Cat's Grin
FRANCOIS MASPERO trans. NANCY AMPHOUX *Viking* £10.95
Plato Park
CAROL RUMENS *Chatto* £10.95

A NEW PUBLISHER; a new novelist; an old tune, deftly played. Mary Flanagan's **Trust** launches Bloomsbury Books with a tragi-comic intrigue among the claret-drinking classes. This scandal in Bohemia revolves around a stolen painting, a legal wrangle, and tentacles of love and faith that stretch from beyond the grave.

Eleanor Linnane, Irish-American and reluctantly rich, secretly transfers much of her wealth to the daughter of an ex-lover before dying in Paris of mismanaged diabetes. A minor but bankable abstract artist, the dreadful Jason, nearly destroys both the girl, Clover, and Eleanor's trusting and trustworthy lawyer Charles before her good deeds posthumously reach out to save them.

Flanagan mixes a cocktail of cash and passion, sprinkled with art and lies. The bulky spirit of Henry James hovers over the whole concoction. At the book's mid-point, amid the ruins of his career, Charles asks: 'how can we trust when there exists in the blood and brain and bone of all of us a treacherous and brutal animal who may at any moment escape and demolish our constructions for safety?' Unreason and catastrophe irrupt into the drawing room and studio: James' 'beast in the jungle', more ravenous as a fear than as a truth. Mary Flanagan is a poised and beguiling stylist whose talents run to more than mere pastiche. But I trust that Bloomsbury's fiction will spread its wings a little wider in the future.

A Californian poet and academic, Sherley Anne Williams moves into fiction in **Dessa Rose** with a neat stroke of historical sleight-of-hand. In 1829 a slave uprising in Kentucky led to a death sentence for its pregnant ringleader, here called Dessa. A year later in North Carolina, rumours circulated of an eccentric white woman who harboured runaways on her ramshackle estate. Shifting the action to 1847, the novel makes Dessa and Miss Ruth meet, first as enemies; then rivals; then sisters: 'Maybe it is only a metaphor, but I now own a summer in the 19th century.'

Williams' writing about the ante-bellum South treads a knife-edge between tenderness and rage. Slavery grants her women the occasions of power and love, for instance as the adored 'mammies' of their owners' children, at the same time as it leaves scars without and within. She traces the moves of black and white, male and female, over this chessboard of authority and deference with a poet's eloquence and an anthropologist's eye for pattern. Yet, since a piece of wishful thinking lies at its core, *Dessa Rose* finally shirks history in favour of romance.

One sentence of Marguerite Poland's **Train to Doringbult** lets on that it, too, excavates a past, albeit a more recent one. Set in an Afrikaans farming community in 1976, it pinpoints the instant at which the Xhosa bird of evil omen, *thekwane*, began its slow flight over the homesteads of the Boers.

Smug Adrian de Villiers kills a young black man in a shooting accident: one more dead bantu; no sweat; no charges. Later, the tribe splits as his liberal brother Jan and sister-in-law Else seek compensation in the courts for a farm-hand, Petrus, crippled by the police. At length, the dead Sipho has his revenge. But justice proves to be blind, and wild. Marguerite Poland never allows her Afrikaners to slip too far beyond the range of readers' sympathy. Quietly, she draws up an indictment of the crimes of oversight and omission implicit in their unpolitical dullness. Though it seldom raises its voice, *Train to Doringbult* strikes deeper into the heartlands of *apartheid* than many more self-justifying works to have emerged from white South Africa.

Bookseller, publisher, occasional jailbird, François Maspero is a Left Bank legend among the ageing *soixante-huitards*. In his first novel, **Cat's Grin**, he plunges into a semi-autobiograhical childhood to recreate the textures of experience in the hungry, hopeful Paris of 1944.

At the hour of Liberation, Luc's parents disappear into the death-camps. His Communist elder brother dies with the Americans as they chase the German army out of France. Like the Cheshire Cat, the watchful 13-year-old loses his grin. Clouded by war and grief, Luc's searing memories of places and people start to fade. Maspero blends a touch of Proust with political history, as sure-footed among the small thrills and regrets of puberty as he is with the Allied battalions who carve up Europe between them. In France, this period has been written into the ground of late by historians and sociologists. *Cat's Grin* shows that a striking piece of fiction can always make room for its own reality.

Carol Rumens' **Plato Park** aims to do for Anglo-Soviet relations what the horde of Luries and Lodges have done for transatlantic literary traffic. A dreaming, devious Moscow hack, Arkady defects to England in quest of the ethereal Elizabeth. She, needless to say, has tilted the other way, convinced that there's more truth in the 'ice-and-fire barbarousness' of Russia 'than in all the seedy, shabby gardens of democracy'. Though a shade predictable, Rumens delivers her cargo of cross-cultural jokes with great aplomb and faultless timing. A small-time fantasist, her hero yearns for release from 'the slummy outskirts of compromise' and fetches up in a Euston bedsit. Pining for a spot of *glasnost* in his life, he cops a rather drastic dose of *perestroika*. □

Fresh

Michael Bayley

He has her in the bakery office,
rising as she kneads
her lovely peach cream tits
on a desktop cleared
of coffee mugs and in-trays.

A day or so later,
when a black pubic hair
found deeply embedded
in one of his large whites
arrives stuck to the top sheet
of a long letter of complaint,

he smiles to himself,
making mental note
of how the customer's outrage
appears heightened by the fact
that the loaf in question
had been purchased,
'still warm, only that morning'.

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FLYING

Pompous pilot

Geoff Dyer

Wind, Sand and Stars *and* Flight to Arras
ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY trans. LEWIS GALANTIERE *Picador* £3.50

I WAS DRAWN to Saint-Exupéry — as to many writers I have come to love — by the cover of a green-spined Penguin Modern Classic: an oil painting of a bi-plane plunging through a rift of light in a bank of dark cloud. Saint-Exupéry himself was drawn to the life depicted on that cover as the blind are drawn to the hearth, 'because the need of the fire is in them'.

Born in 1900 he joined the French Air Force when he was 21 and spent the rest of his life flying or writing about it. Almost everything he wrote, he lived. His novels *Southern Mail* (1929) and *Night Flight* (1931) are based on his experiences flying Air Mail when every nocturnal flight was an assault on the unknown. While trying to break the record for a flight from Paris to Saigon, as he records in one of the pieces in *Wind, Sand and Stars*, he crashed in the desert and almost died of thirst.

He disappeared in 1944 flying a reconnaissance flight for the American Air Force, probably shot down by a German fighter. Even in his last moments I doubt that he lost faith in the prophetic words of a fellow flyer: 'It's worth it, it's worth the final smash up.'

Flying for most of us today is an absence — a cramped suspension — between the local and an already familiar elsewhere. For the pioneers of Saint-Exupéry's generation the breakthroughs in aeronautic technology were recent and risky enough to make them the conscious heirs of Daedalus and Icarus. Among the first to testify to the realisation of one of humankind's deepest longings, they were able to see things that had never been seen before. The aeroplane unveiled for them 'the true face of the earth' and Saint-Exupéry is at his best as a witness *participating* in the mysteries of the firmament:

> Great black waterspouts had reared themselves seemingly in the immobility of temple pillars. Swollen at their tops, they were supporting the squat and lowering arch of the tempest, but through the rifts in the arch there fell slabs of light and the moon sent her radiant beams between the pillars down upon the frozen tiles of the sea. Through these uninhabited ruins Mermoz made his way, gliding slantwise from one channel of light to the next . . .

Such scenes, scattered throughout his writing, are observed not in the interest of sensation but scrutinised as a force that cannot be met, but that can be ridden, overcome. The pilot's oxygen supply is 'an umbilical cord' connecting him to the plane; the plane which seems to isolate him 'from the great problems of nature, plunges him more deeply into them' so that the cockpit contains the universe, its luminous dials like 'miniature constellations' giving off 'the same mineral glow of the stars'.

Saint-Exupéry was not content to be a writer of adventure stories or aerial travelogues. Flying revealed to him — or so he believed — not only the true nature of the planet but also the highest potential of those who inhabit it. His sensations were his guide but they were articulated through his reading of Bergson and Nietzsche, among others. To the hazards of the elements his most memorable character, Riviere in *Night Flight*, opposes the force of his will; self-fulfilment is found in self-overcoming. What matters in the individual is the idea of Man, 'the onward movement, the momentum'.

This metaphysics of the spirit is all very well when it is implicit in the immediacy of experience as is the case in *Wind, Sand and Stars*. In *Flight to Arras*, where a straightforward description of a wartime sortie is intercut with lengthy passages on the human spirit, the swelling organ music of his disquisitions becomes increasingly tiresome. Commenting on flight machinery he notes that perfection is attained not when there is nothing left to add but when there is no longer anything to take away and he would have benefitted from applying this Hemingway-like dictum more rigorously to his prose.

Part of the problem may lie in the translation (made in 1942) but the overblown strain of what a later translator calls 'baroque lyricism' is certainly there in the original. Picador are to be congratulated on this joint reissue but, while there is much to wonder at and admire in the volume, there is also much that it is best to glide over. For its evocation of pilot and plane at the mercy of the elements and the *dramatic* resolution of his metaphysical theme, *Night Flight* remains Saint-Exupéry's masterpiece. □

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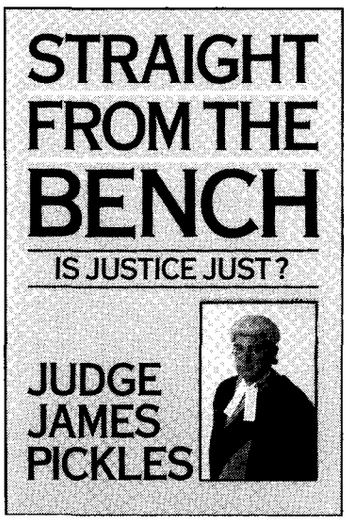

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DENT

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OBITUARY

Last Wednesday **Sarah Baylis**, the writer, was tragically killed in a road accident. She was my friend. She was also a talented and vivid young woman who was looking forward to the publication of her first adult novel, *Utrillo's Mother*, next month.

Sarah was only 30 when she died, but her creative achievements were already significant. Like so many other young women she had nourished desires to be a 'writer'; unlike so many, Sarah actually did something about it. So, on 1 January 1983, she sat down and began to write an adventure story for young women called *Vila*. Apart from wanting to tell a good story — and Sarah was a natural storyteller — she remembered from her adolescence how few adventure books cast young women as the active protagonists of a tale. Sarah was not interested in creating unrealistically virtuous characters: in all her novels the women are rumbustious, irritable, strong, likeable and creative.

Vila was so successful in its aims that it won the Other Award for Children's Fiction in 1985. Her next book for children, *The Tomb of Reeds* (to be published in August by Julia MacRae), again explored within a seemingly fantastic setting the very concrete theme of girls' friendships, and the *worth* of those friendships. Sarah believed adolescence was a difficult time for girls because of the intense pressure to split apart in search of boys, and male approval in general, and she rejected this both in her writing and in her life. Sarah was proud of being a lesbian — she had a long and passionate relationship with the novelist Lesley Thomson — and of her friendships, which she pursued with a parallel commitment and honesty.

Utrillo's Mother is an impressionistic — although thoroughly researched — account of the life of the French painter Suzanne Valadon, whom patriarchy and posterity have cut down to (female) size: her painter son, Utrillo, is now more famous than she. It also explores the human tendency to mythologise: to embellish, deny and romanticise ourselves and others, particularly in death. Sarah was a stern refuser of such notions. She *knew* life was complicated and messy, and she wanted to write about it as it was. As she said in a letter to a friend, when writing about the life of Saint Brigit, a character in *The Tomb of Reeds:* 'I see her as part-poet, part-warrior, representing a duality in women of creativity and destruction . . . I've had enough of this marshmallow, pacifist, earth-mother image of women (all seeds and babies and singing) and I find absolutely no reflection of such womanhood in myself or anyone else.'

Melissa Benn

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Tongue in cheek?

Mike Peters, Leeds
Well done, Ken Follett ('Socialist spying policy' (*NS* 10 April). What a splendid parody of a Labour 'policy' on spooks. I couldn't have thought of a better device for highlighting the absurdity of current socialist conceptions of the secret state than his brilliant tongue-in-cheek scenario of a socialist government 'using' the existing intelligence community. He demonstrates the imbecility of the idea of making these agencies 'accountable' by five rules. Here are a few more to enhance the satirical effect: organisations being infiltrated should have the opportunity to check the accuracy of the reports submitted by such agents: targets for assassination should be notified in advance of the time and place of the intended operation, etc.

All good knock-about stuff. The assumption that the secret state apparatus is a neutral instrument that can be adapted to a variety of social ends is indeed *reductio ad absurdam* of the fashionable reformism (sorry — 'New Realism') of the left today. It *was* tongue-in-cheek, wasn't it?

Working together in Europe

J. L. Whitty, General Secretary, The Labour Party
The Labour Party's activity in Europe is rather more fruitful than Hugh O'Shaughnessy *(NS* 3 April) might suggest.

The Joint Statements with our comrades in the West German SPD were unique in the European socialist experience. Unlike some international agreements, they set out precise proposals for joint European-wide action to tackle unemployment, correct regional imbalances and reorient trade policy. They also supported stronger EEC measures on the environment and a major reform of the CAP.

The Party is active in the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community which holds its Congress in Lisbon next month. Its committees on economic affairs and the environment have helped inform our own policy development. These are just a few of the many examples I could mention which show that the Labour Party has advanced significantly from the stale 'in or out' debates of the past.

Unlike the Tories and the Liberal/SDP Alliance, the democratic socialists in Europe do have plans worked out together to combat the 18 million unemployment level in the EEC. Panaceas of the 'internal market' are no solution.

À bas the quilted life-style

Lorraine Hewitt, Canterbury, Kent
I have read the *NS* for nearly all the 25 years I have been a socialist; stuck with you through poverty and disillusionment (mine) and occasional dullness (yours). What might finally make me chuck you is that in *1987* approximately 98 per cent of your contributors are male. Of course some of them (Hugo Williams, for instance) are wonderful but that is not the point.

Furthermore I do not buy socialist papers to learn fancy ways of cooking murdered creatures, however female the columnist or ethnic the recipe. Nor do I appreciate the relish (spiced with wincing middle-class guilt)) for bourgeois, quilted life-styles. If this goes on, I shall give my weekly £ to 'Class War'. You don't really want to start being seen more as targets *for* than comrades *of* revolutionaries, do you?

Celts arise!

Ted M. Spanswick, Pontypridd
Pay little attention to the analysis of Welsh political affairs by your Tim Richards (*NS* 3 April). Do not imagine that in voting 'Labour' Welsh electors vote against their own identities, traditions and nationality. For here we have a nation (Cymru means 'Land of the brothers') with its own ancient language, flag and anthem. Mrs Thatcher emphasises human rights with the Russian leaders saying rights are not confined to individuals, but extent to the community and other groupings within the nation. But we in Cymru are on a par with, say, Latvia in the USSR.

Bernard Crick pointed out recently that there was nothing in Marxist theory opposed to the existence of community, and by inference the nation. There may well have been abuse of such traditions by capitalists, yes, and that has to be carefully provided for. But diversity is both the essence of art, culture generally and a vital condition for freedom itself. In setting its face against the cultural attachments and aspirations of both the Welsh and the Scottish nations, the ▷

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A liberal citizenship

I am glad, as a Liberal, to join in the debate on the future of socialism because it involves everybody in Britain to the left of centre, which includes my party and the Alliance.

Once Labour thinkers start to search for 'socialism without the state' or are prepared to abandon a class-analysis in favour of a liberal view which starts from the individual in society, it is inevitable that they and we will keep bumping into each other in the intellectual undergrowth. No bad thing either.

'In the book from which the following excerpt is drawn I develop the idea that fraternity is the necessary mediating principle between liberty and equality. In my belief people in Britain should be more free and more equal but they will end up neither, without a stronger definition of what constitutes common membership of the society we share, in a more coherent idea of citizenship.

'The materialist right in Britain, well exemplified by Mrs Thatcher, has put an increasing emphasis on the individual in his or her main economic rile as "consumer". To categorise your fellow citizens primarily as consumers fits well with the mixture of social authoritarianism and invididual economic completion, which characterise Thatcherism. Marxists, from a different perspective, would strongly reject the idea of citizenship. By making the individual the source and fountainhead of legitimacy in society, the central role of class in society is denied.

'Non-Marxists, particularly those in the Labour Party in pursuit of a more attractive image and conscious that the working class has halved in size as a percentage of the population in the last 30 years, are ready to discard this class analysis but show very few signs of knowing what to put in its place unless, in common with all politicians, it is the notion of the individual as "voter". Although everyone is a "consumer" or "voter" from time to time, neither description is adequate to define the unique worth of each individual.

'Each person also needs a special place on which to stand in society. That place, which should be rooted in legitimacy and constitute the basis of equal consideration, is *citizenship*.

'In a modern democratic society, the individual's special place cannot depend upon status in a fixed hierarchy, determined by birth or tradition. It must depend instead upon a universal definition of equality which is common to all men and women, in respect of certain crucial social relationships. It is this assurance of basic equality on which the social contract depends as well as the individual's sense of value and identity. Without it the individual is excluded, if not physically then socially, from the common life.

'The equality of inclusive citizenship should have three elements: first, the guarantee of human rights, civil liberty and equality before the law; second, universal economic provision at a level which makes participation in social life possible; third, equal access to information and education.

'In liberal democracies the social price to be paid for complete equality of outcome has been perceived as too high. The sacrifice of liberty involved in organising for complete equality is perceived to be so great that not only would economic initiative be halted but civil rights would be greatly restricted.

'Given that equality of outcome has been abandoned as a feasible or desirable objective even by most democratic socialists, other ways of analysing the common obligation have been sought. Equality of opportunity has found support from all parts of the political spectrum from left to right, indicating as it does a preference for open democracy over fixed hierarchy and for free markets over predetermined outcomes.

'Equality of opportunity is indeed extremely relevant to questions of universal access to information and education. However, it is not an adequate answer to the immediate question of what standard of economic welfare should be provided for everyone.

'I should like to suggest two complementary answers. The first has to do with the way in which policy choices should be made in the political process. Derived from the thinking of John Rawls, it may simply be stated as the proposition that any economic policy change is prima facie justifiable if, as a realistically expected result, the least well-off, those at the bottom of society's pile, will be better off than if the change had not occurred, for then their consent to the change could be assumed.

'However, the Rawls test alone, desirable as I regard it, would not by itself preclude this growing inequality. It obviously embraces the possibility that in the process of the least well-off becoming better off, the gap between them and the most wealthy might also be widened. Much of the economic rhetoric of the Reagan Administration, for instance, goes further and sets out to explain not only that these are mutually compatible objectives but that the lot of the poor can only be improved by relatively greater increases in the well-being of the rich, and therefore greater inequality.

'Thus the parallel test I should like to propose is that everyone should be in receipt of a minimum income at a level which allows them to remain integrated in society and to meet basic common needs and which is regularly adjusted upwards in relation to the general wealth. This is, incidentally, a more equitable and feasible way of making progress than the TUC's proposals for a statutory minimum wage for those in work.

'Yet now, in the face of widespread unemployment and serious relative deprivation, the government seems to be determined to strike at the concept of the social right of citizenship for all, the universal solid base. In trying to separate need from justice, it has been reduced to paternalist benevolence towards the deprived, abandoning general fairness in favour of selective compassion.

'This sort of citizenship income scheme offers the combination of personal freedom and social solidarity which commends it as the basis of universal inclusion which is essential to a fraternal society.'

Richard Holme

This article is excerpted from The People's Kingdom, *published by Bodley Head, £5.95 pb, £11.95 hb. Richard Holme is chairman of the Constitutional Reform Centre and adviser to David Steel.*

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party which I must call the Walworth Road Labour Party will presently bring the entire edifice down.

Our mam didn't see the bathroom until she was 55, and our dad hardly worked after serving on the Somme, so I don't want any lessons from Tim Richards — or Neil Kinnock. I see their party as imperialist and against me as a member of the Welsh community. This can only be changed by an independent Wales Labour Party, of which I am honoured to be the Convenor.

Hideous language

Paul N. Wilson, Colne, Lancs.

Why is it that the left writes so dreadfully about art? (*NS* 20 March). First we have Tony Dunn's impenetrable hogwash; then we have Simon Cunliffe inflicting 'commodification' on us: I know what he means, and I even agree with him, but surely he could express himself without resorting to such hideous neologisms? Hell's bells: does nobody read Ruskin or Morris any more?

And then we have Kim Newman, a horror critic, seemingly (certainly makes my hair stand on end), who sees horror fiction 'speaking for and to the late 20th century in a fashion of which mainstream fiction is proving itself incapable.' Like Gunter Grass, Eva Figes, Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter, Alasdair Grey and James Kelman are proving themselves incapable?

Peace in court

Mrs Marjorie Black, Northwich, Cheshire

Mrs Helen Ellis, born 1915 and now confined to a wheelchair, grandmother to five children and a member of CND, appeared at Northwich magistrates' court recently for non-payment of a fine of £50 plus costs for cutting a piece of wire at Capenhurst nuclear establishment. She refused to pay the fine saying the laws of God are superior to those of man. She was sent to prison for 14 days.

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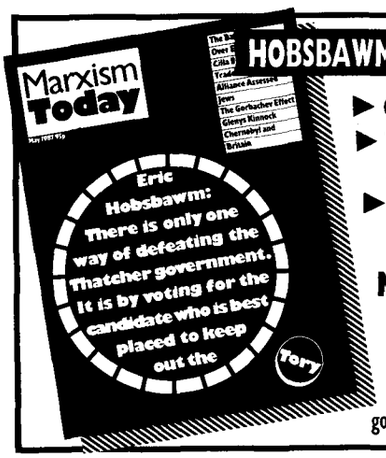
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BACKCHAT

INFRA DIG

While Rome burns

Diana Eden

I HAVE ALWAYS found it difficult to understand why those of a philosophical nature find Truth a fascinating but elusive concept. In my experience Truth is usually simple, if seldom pure, and consists largely of discovering — after having been assured that there was no late train from Cleethorpes back to London, so he'd have to stay away the night — that, actually, there bloody *was*. Truth, therefore, could be described as a universal railway timetable and non-Truth as the interpretation of that schedule by the randy opportunist.

Persevering with this cosy British Rail analogy (for, sometimes, perseverance works): to those who have seen one Stoppard play too many and would insist that, even when the train is moving from the platform, one can never be quite certain that it is not in fact the *platform* which is moving from the train — to people of this irritating ilk, I would answer a resounding and emphatic 'Bollocks!' So come now, girls and boys, let's have no further rain forests felled to produce yet more tomes on Truth.

The perennially challenging topic, and one which provokes a sliding scale of definition, is that of Honesty. Perhaps, like a sense of humour, Honesty can most usefully be explained as the quality that *we* abundantly possess and others sadly lack. *You* are dishonest; *I* merely exercise my talent for creative accountancy on my expenses. *You* make personal, overseas phone calls from the office twice a week; *I* only phone local kith and kin 35 times a day.

Persevering with this cosy office-world analogy, here follows a totally fictitious fable (*NS* lawyers please note) of everyday company folk. Charlie, a cheery, elderly, lowly (important this, the *lowly*) worker at a multi-national was caught out in a one-off fiddle involving all of 20 quid. Despite long service, popularity and old age, he was invited to collect his cards forthwith. Anguished by his heinous crime, he had neither mind nor stomach to publicise the lapse via official appeal or protest. It had been a fair cop guvs and he vanished almost overnight.

Now, in this same fictitious company, high-ranking employees with rooms and washrooms on the sumptuous upper floors do not so much fiddle their expenses as orchestrate them into symphonies dedicated to harmonious, gilded life-styles. They are the lotus eaters, daily devouring languid 'business' lunches, consuming cholesterol and time at an average rate of 60 minutes per course. One fellow, ever post-prandially at his best, has embraced the new technology, activates his ansaphone on the dot of three o'clock and is slumped upon his Parker Knoll in Sidcup as the carriage-clock chimes four.

A PR woman in another (but, of course, equally fictitious) company loudly lamented a broken love affair, not least because she'd spent 'two thousand quid on dining-out that little shit' — but told me that, thankfully, she'd had the foresight to claim every mouthful on expenses. A retired (and imaginary) civil servant whom I phoned listed the items regularly liberated from his former workplace and concluded that never in the field of human con tricks had so much been owned by so many: typewriters, cassette recorders, documents, information, not to mention the occasional husband, lover and wife.

We are all men of the world; is there a need to itemise the routine abuse of mailrooms, xerox machines, company cars, stationery, secretarial services and hands up that reader who has just had the great good grace to blush.

Honesty's perimeters are expansive and elastic and the higher one ascends the company ladder the longer they stretch. But this self-evident Truth, this acceptable and accepted face of capitalism, is little help to the humble and fictitious Charlie. However, I confess that if he *did* exist (and, of course, he doesn't) I would here be mighty tempted to misuse this column's space by conveying, on the house and free of charge, the heartfelt personal message that he is much — and widely — missed. □

FIRST PERSON

Gimme an F

Nick Wickham

HIP AND UNHIP alike can now celebrate 20 years since the Summer of Love and, being the first TV generation (then watching it, now making it), everyone can expect 'splendido' coverage from the meedja (a hip person grown-up's word).

Out in San Francisco, the city of flowers, gentle people and big, big bridges — where it all actually *happened* — the gurus of '67 reunited last month to check out the Sixties legacy. Dig? Well 500 middle-class, middle-aged amerikans did. i went to see.

Pulling in the crowds were acid prophets Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey, anti-socialist social activist Abbie Hoffman, feminist historians Betty Friedan and Deirdre English, terrestrial pediatrician and peace mover Dr Benjamin Spock, a quarry of rock and rollers and, on behalf of the civil rights movement, olympic athlete turned sociologist Harry Edwards. In the end, seriously unamused by the 75 bucks entrance fee, Edwards decided not to speak. 'So Sixties!' chuckled one greying member of the Then Generation. Too true; who back then would have thought that 20 years on Harry Edwards would (nearly) have been the only black person in a gathering of 500 people.

Some things just stop changing. Ronald Reagan as governor and gasser of California was old. As President of the United States he is still old. But the Hippies and the Yippies of '67 have become the Yuppies and the middle-aged of '87, busily forgetting about films like *Gassss* . . .

Abbie Hoffman of the Chicago Seven or Eight fame (he claims never to have been there) is *not* yuppie. No, he still adheres to the 'fuck them' school of thought. It's just that everyone else has become a yuppie (or, to be less passé, Dinky — dual income no kids yet). Although pitying the new morality of the young ('If there's no sex and no drugs then the rock 'n' roll better be good') Hoffman is not a man for a party. But opting for direct action over political organisation means

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that the system defines the limits of change.

Alternatively, as one Texan couple saw it, Hoffman is a supergrass-style CIA double agent, *personally* defining and limiting social change in Amerika. A little paranoid? Hoffman is currently suing the army for misrepresentation in their ads for 'a great career': i.e. cleaning toilets and killing people. But who knows?

More vehemently anti-political are Tom Robbins and Ken Kesey. 'The *Zeitgeist* of the '60s was spirtitual,' says Robbins. 'I can still do things without thinking,' says Kesey. Both live in the country, write books and take drugs. For Robbins it was and still is about Psychedelics. Flashing back at this moment to the sight of the homeless in foodlines or sleeping in doorways, to news of 50,000 GIs gathering to take some exercise in El Honduragua, to the 'bullshit economy', to Star Wars, *ET* and *Aliens*, I was suddenly glad that Harry Edwards wasn't there . . .

Back in the crimson Palace of Fine Arts, Betty Friedan looked as though she wished she wasn't. But Timothy Leary was enthusiastic about the approach. That morning he had substituted silicon chips for acid tabs as the future source of intelligence (in both senses), in a cyber-punk world inspired by William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*. From Newtonian mechanical thought to Heisenbergian choice of realities. It's a vision that would suit the 66-year-old comedian well as he currently heads a computer software company. No, the drugs sounded good, but Kesey talking about puddles of water, life after death and spiritualism got him mad. 'Leave me out!' he cried. He has after all got a hefty counter-cultural individualist reputation to live up to.

Coming from a different branch of medicine and the same vintage as both Reagan and the Peace Movement, Dr Spock takes a more logical approach to campaigning against cultural tendencies. The grandfather of the Baby Boom and godfather to Provos, Diggers and the Now Generation was recently arrested breaking into a Trident II missile site. But the prize for political realism went to Betty Friedan and Deirdre English.

Like the Peace and Civil Rights Movements, the Women's Movement has a structure and so a heritage that predates the Summer of Love by rather a long time. It also, as both sharply pointed out, has a responsibility to pass that torch on to the next generation. Lessons have been learned by the right as well as the left, but faced with a biological clock, a generation of women could loose 20 years of progress and discover a new 'Feminine Mystique'. Unless, that is, the democratic process is used to change the model society is based on.

It was the commitment and the experience of these two women that showed up the historical failings of the other speakers to change things. So it seems fair to give the final words to a teenager — 'Don't bring back the Hippies!' — and to Betty Friedan: 'If you don't live your life politically, you are only partly alive.' □

FOOD

Going Dutch

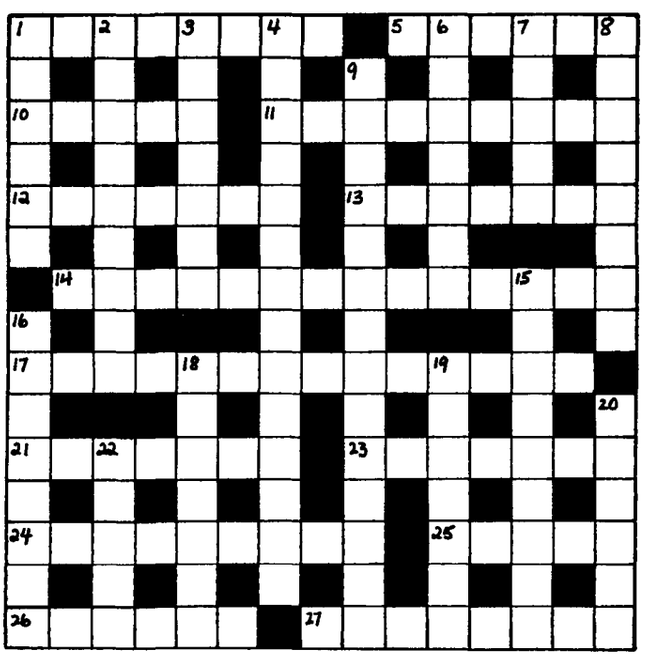
Colin Spencer

THE TIME-SHARE touts on Spanish beaches may have just been banned, but property companies are whizz kids at marketing. Around Christmas, I received a tatty piece of paper telling me that I had been given three free nights at any hotel in Europe. No arrangements could be made over the telephone — I had to call in at a travel agency near Oxford Circus bringing my invitation with me. Once there, I was told to go to the basement where a smooth salesman, smelling strongly of Brut, took the invitation and gave me a large mug of Nescafé. The room had pine tables and chairs, its walls were covered with posters of sunny resorts from Miami to Tahiti and, in the background, the unmistakable bravura tones of Pavarotti. Curiouser and curiouser . . .

Illumination struck when the salesman returned with two large files containing glossy pictures of villas and apartments near Marbella. There was no mention of a weekend freebie in gay Paree. I sat through an interminable video, but then rebelled and fled when another video began with the Gallic tones of Louis Jourdan telling me of the charms of Florida. My free weekend could only be fixed by a return session, but I was hooked by the

Weekend Crossword 1555

£3 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1555, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8BA, by first post 11 May.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

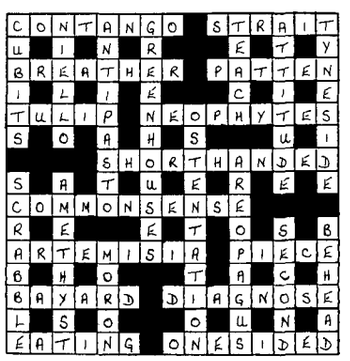
1. Cancel an engagement from contempt of opposition? (8)
5. Mistake made by backward class (6)
10. Less common letters which appear in the paper are read (5)
11. Bring back routine or man lies in disorder (9)
12. Swimmer begins to get a name in a newspaper article (7)
13. Looks for birds (7)
14. Battle with a spanner somewhere in London (8,6)
17. Examination which makes open space seem attractive (6,8)
21. Unhealthy looking little fellow in an overcoat (7)
23. Turn up carrying the favourite to take part in the race (7)
24. Restaurant discovers source of wealth in unusual taste (9)
25. The florid features of Dickens' prose style? (5)
26. Go round by the street for a walk (6)
27. I did lose for a change, although favourite (8)

DOWN

1. Depend on a woman in a dreadful way (6)
2. Warning of disaster given by true adult entering business (9)
3. Shorten a game (7)
4. Although badly learnt during bad behaviour at school, it provides comfort (7,7)
6. One who gets paid a pound although only a beginner (7)
7. It is a sin to spend a penny on a journey (5)
8. Urge people to be journalists (8)
9. Foretold an irregular redcoat posting (14)
15. Tributes made about a game for ladies (9)
16. Sinks a hundred during meals (8)
18. Best man appearing in something precious (7)
19. Lad with one arm becomes a sailor (7)
20. Thoroughly acquainted with the language used in disease (6)
22. Afterwards had food in both hands (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1553



Prizewinners to 1553

Sue & David French (Leamington Spa)
Hugh Johnson (London SE21)
Mrs. B. Morrison (Ellon, Aberdeenshire)

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salesmanship methods and needed to find out what a week of time-share in the smallest villa would actually cost.

The property company was Kenning Atlantic and a one-bedroom studio villa with kitchen, bathroom, sitting room and balcony for one week in the cheapest part of the year, the winter weeks — which do not include Christmas — would have cost me £5,500. At the most modest estimate, I worked out that Kenning Atlantic would make about £210,000 for this cramped little villa, when to build it must have cost not more than £20,000. Quite a profit.

But the saga does not end there, for the free three nights were not completely free after all. A booklet called Flexibreaks International lists over 600 hotels in Europe and the UK where the system works in the winter months. But the agreement is that you eat in the hotel and must pay a minimum amount for breakfast and dinner. This, as it happens, roughly covers the expense of the room. I wanted to return to Amsterdam and fixed up at the Hotel Trianon where I had to pay 65 Guilder per person per day — just over £40 altogether.

This arrangement at the hotel was all the more maddening because you can eat well and cheaply in Amsterdam. There are stalls that sell the wonderful marinaded, salted herring, where in winter you can buy hot green pea soup flavoured with ham, deep-fried Indonesian delicacies or Dutch fried doughnuts. The local brown shrimps have masses of flavour, are pre-shelled and taste of the sea. Dutch restaurants with their verandas upon the pavements also provide good smoked eel; the portions are huge and are often too large for the British appetite. So order modestly in the first place. There are many pancake houses. One of them, the **Johan de Wit**, specialises in giant pancakes, which are doughy and much heavier than French crèpes and the filling goes on top and not inside. These are served with savoury and sweet additions from apple to salami, from syrup to cheese.

Two of the most elegant Indonesian restaurants are **Sarang Mas**, not far from the Central Station, and **Sama Sebo**, just beside the Rijksmuseum. Here, again, you will get portions fit for Amazonian weightlifters, but the chilli and the *nasi goreng* are fiery enough to send your head into orbit. My only criticism is that the cuisine is too orientated to Western tastes in the amount of meat served, while those gargantuan portions would keep each slim Indonesian sated for several days.

For every Indonesian restaurant, there are three Chinese, some of which also cook a range of Indonesian dishes. Go for the fish dishes, especially the shellfish, and for Chinese methods of cooking the local brown shrimps which are particularly good in ginger and lemon grass sauces. Most of these restaurants are busy and popular. The **Happy Town** was doing a brisk trade in take-aways on the night I was there. You could eat a huge meal for two people for about £20 while the Indonesian restaurants above would cost little more. □

Restaurant Johan de Wit, Rembrandtsplein 10, Amsterdam
Sarang Mas, Damrak 44, Amsterdam
Sama Sebo, P.C. Hooftstraat, Amsterdam
Happy Town, Vijzelstraat 121, Amsterdam

Weekend competition

No 2972 **Set by Russell Lucas**

With the Tories now 93 points ahead in opinion polls, there is clearly a desperate need for a 'Save the Kinnock' or 'Kin Aid' campaign. Adverts, please, for a General Secretary for such a worthy charity, describing its objectives. 150 words maximum, by Wednesday 6 May.

No 2969 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Cleaned-up versions of famous salacious texts.

Report **By Gray Dorn**

Today is the first real day of spring; the sun is shining, the churchyard across the road glorious with tulips and daffodils, the local people resplendent in their Union Jack T-shirts. So why should I stay cooped up in here judging expurgated filth? No reason at all. The winners were good, and the rest weren't. You all overdid the Chaucerian spelling; no one was clever enough to try the Marquis de Sade; I liked the Lawrences. £10 each, and I'm off to fall on my face on somebody's new-mown lawn.

D. H. Lawrence: Lady Chatterley's Friend

'Eee, th'art a beautiful masher', said Mellors, wrapping his large capable hand round the fragile Worcester cup.

'Masher?' replied Connie, 'masher? Is that the same as "brewer"?'

Mellors laughed gently. 'Nay, lass, brewing's what canteen staff do, with their big horrible urns. Mashing's refined, takes class, you've got that, lass.'

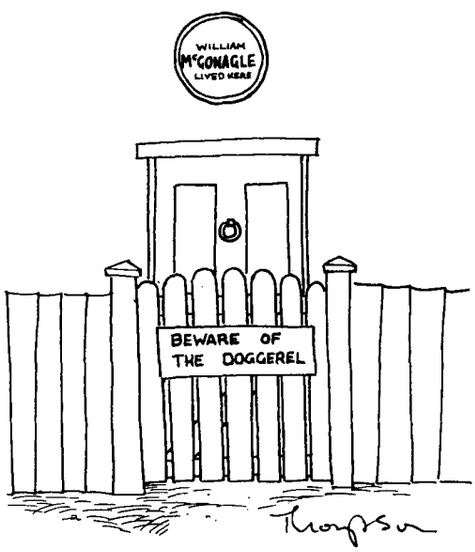
Connie felt herself blushing and looked down with pride at the accidental, self-inflicted scald on her left wrist. How brightly the red glowed, as the fire spread from her face down to her arms.

Mellors put down his cup and patted the bulbous side of the brown glazed earthenware teapot.

'See, lass, th'art got to do it right. Right sort of pot, warmed, and dried, add the tea, then take the pot to the kettle and make sure the water's boiling: 'S cold now. Would you like to do it again?'

Connie felt a surge of excitement. 'Yes,' she breathed, 'Yes!'

KATIE MALLETT



After he had finished, neither of them moved for several minutes. The light inside the gamekeeper's hut was now almost gone but, such was Connie's absorption in what had passed, she had quite failed to remark its fading. One side of her modern-woman's mind tried to analyse what had happened to her, but at the same time the feelings flowing through her veins told her that she had been, in the old phrase, 'mastered'; and mastered, ironically enough, by one whom convention obliged to address her cold, ineffectual husband as Master.

At length Mellors stirred in the half light. 'Tha come nearly all t'way wi' me that time', he said.

Connie nurtured the rough compliment. 'I still have much to learn', she replied softly.

'Ay. But tha sh'ld niver iv used thi Get Out of Jail card when I 'ad 'otels on baith Park Lane an' Mayfair . . .'

NOEL PETTY

John Cleland: Fanny Hill

Mr H, whom came again to my chamber, held my hand and told me how vastly he admired my fortitude in protecting my virtue and being fully sensible of the decorous constraints and nice chivalries that order Christian conduct, entreated me to kneel beside the bed, to pray for the conversion of harlots, the blessing of brothels, the purification of procurers and the communion in godly fellowship of all the hell-rakes, whore-masters and lechers that supported my unhappy profession.

Having prayed with him most heartily, we inflated a dozen or so condoms, contrived bunting from an assortment of intimate garments, and assembled a Christmas tree from merkins of many hues. Then, we went with tapers into the other rooms of the house, inducing my sister whores and their guests to join us in a service of redemption. We sang hymns and binding our mistress's eyes with cleansed, menstrual cloths, played merrily at Buff.

PAMELA JANE POOH

C. P. Cavafy

It was in a tavern down by the docks
That I met him. As we shared a table,
The passion we also shared became only too plain.
Tremblingly, I walked back with him to his room
In a broken-down tenement — a squalid room,
Yet exquisite in my recollection.
Soon, in glorious nakedness upon the bed
There lay — his collection of Hellenistic coins.

I never saw him again — but oh,
Those ravishingly rounded shapes,
These delicate contours, those
Golden surfaces — my hands caress you still.

JON FERNSIDE

Joe Orton's Diary

After walking for a while I found a gent's lavatory in a patch of grass near a church. I went in. It was very dark. There was a man in there already, a large, well-built labourer. I introduced myself as Edna Welthorpe (Mrs). He laughed so much, a deep throaty chuckle, that serious embarrassment was only narrowly averted. It took less than a minute to persuade him to allow his address to be used, and what I shall describe as a technical breach was soon taking place.

On my return I found Kenneth in his *mater dolorosa* mood and decided to say nothing. Talk of false names and accommodation addresses would only make him even more nervy. Every knock on the door would be Inspector Truscott making inquiries. I'll tell him later. He'll be glad of the extra British Telecom shares.

KEITH NORMAN

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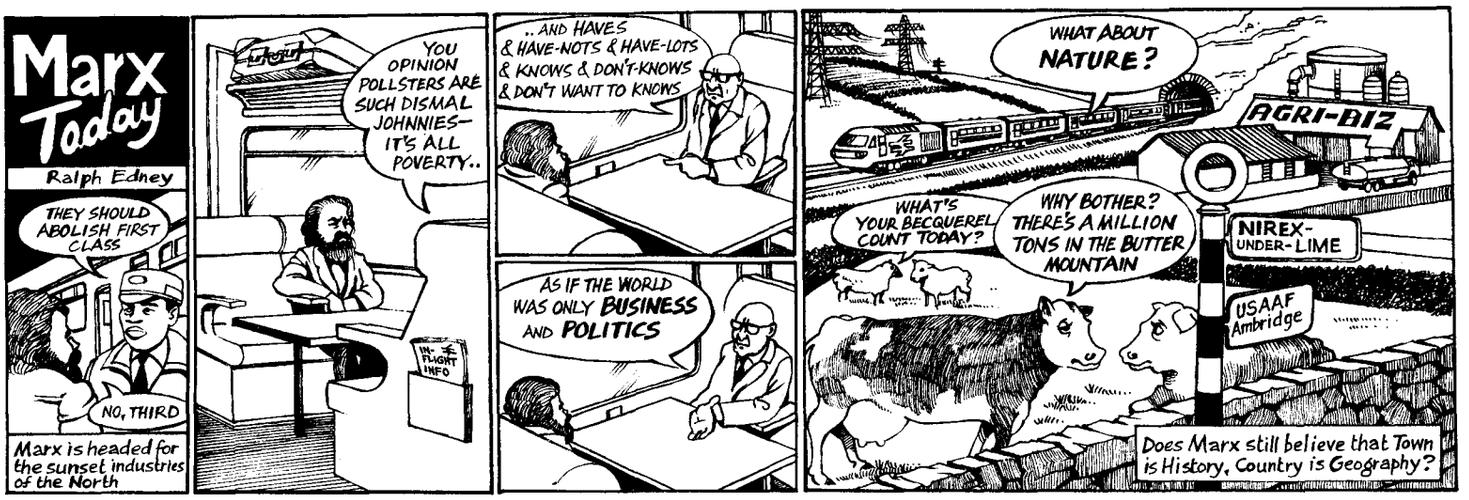
Marx Today
Ralph Edney
THEY SHOULD ABOLISH FIRST CLASS
NO, THIRD
Marx is headed for the sunset industries of the North
YOU OPINION POLLSTERS ARE SUCH DISMAL JOHNNIES— IT'S ALL POVERTY..
IN-FLIGHT INFO
.. AND HAVES & HAVE-NOTS & HAVE-LOTS & KNOWS & DON'T-KNOWS & DON'T WANT TO KNOWS
AS IF THE WORLD WAS ONLY BUSINESS AND POLITICS
WHAT ABOUT NATURE?
AGRI-BIZ
WHAT'S YOUR BECQUEREL COUNT TODAY?
WHY BOTHER? THERE'S A MILLION TONS IN THE BUTTER MOUNTAIN
NIREX-UNDER-LIME
USAAF Ambridge
Does Marx still believe that Town is History, Country is Geography?

Chess

THE TOURNAMENT of the moment — and very likely it will be the tournament of the year — is the 2nd SWIFT (stands for *Society for Worldwide Interbank Telecommunication*) International in Brussels, which finishes this weekend. The organizers have pulled off quite a coup by persuading all three of Kasparov, Karpov and Korchnoi to contest a tourney for the very first time. Assessment of standings in the early rounds has been complicated by Hübner's withdrawal and the postponement of games involving his replacement, Tal. Nigel Short, having lost to Timman and with an unfavourable adjournment against Korchnoi, seemed unlikely to be able to continue his winning streak from Wijk aan Zee and Reykjavik. Kasparov started with three straight wins (over Meulders, van der Wiel and Winants), but clashes with his major rivals are yet to come, in particular Black against Karpov in round 10.

In the 1st SWIFT International last year Karpov won with some ease, two points ahead of Korchnoi. Tony Miles, Timman and Torre came a ½ point further behind. This was one of the wins that contributed to Tony's score:

Miles-Jadoul, Brussels 1986. King's Indian, Sämisch.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. f3 0-0 6. Be3 Nc6 7. Qd2 a6 8. Nge2 Bd7 9. h4 h5 10. 0-0-0 b5 11. Bh6 Kh7 12. Bg5 bxc4 13. g4 Nxg4 An attempt to buy some security, rather than risking the full force of White's attack after 13 . . . hxg4 14. h5 Nxh5 15. Ng3. **14. fxg4 Bxg4 15. Bh3 Bxh3 16. Rxh3 Qd7 17. Rg3 Nb4 18. Nf4 f6 19. Nxg6! fxg5 20. Nxf8+ Rxf8 21. Qe2 g4 22. Qxc4 Nc6 23. Rgg1 Rf2** 23 . . . e5 is interesting. After 24. dxe5 Nxe5 or 24. d5 Nd4 Black has compensation for the exchange. **24. Rgf1 Rxf1 25. Rxf1 Nxd4 26. Qf7 Kh6?** 26 . . . Qe6 still offers some compensation — and in any case he had to play it. **27. Rf5! Nxf5 28. exf5 Kh7 29. f6 1-0.**

The 54th USSR championship in Minsk was also a FIDE Zonal, with 3 world championship qualifying places at stake. It used to be possible to rely on an old guard of proven quality to dominate Soviet chess year after year. Nowadays the situation has become much more volatile. No sooner does one group break through to GM titles and 2550+ Elo ratings than it is swamped by the next wave. A host of eclipsed talents that once shone brightly — e.g., Romanishin, Kuzmin, Dorfman — failed even to qualify for the championship. Alexander Beliavsky and Valery Salov (22 years old) tied for first place. Since Beliavsky had already earned an interzonal berth through his high international rating, two others were able to claim interzonal places — Jan Ehlvest (24, and at the start of the tournament the lowest-rated competitor) and Vyacheslav Eingorn.

Among those eliminated from the world championship cycle in this event were Psakhis, Tukmakov, Lputian, Chernin and Gavrikov. Even Yusupov would have failed to qualify, though of course he is through anyway. We thought we were hard done by when the British Isles got just 2 qualifying places from the Bath Zonal. But only 3 for the USSR is a far grosser anomaly — in the latest Elo lists 33 of the top 100 rated players come from the USSR, against 7 from Britain (all English). There are just too many good players in the Soviet Union competing for too small a number of international opportunities. Bob Wade has suggested a remedy for it — the constituent republics of the USSR should be given independent affiliation to FIDE. If Wales, Scotland, Ireland and even the Channel Islands can be members of FIDE in their own right, why not the Ukraine, the RSFSR, Armenia and Latvia? I think it is the single most desirable reform in world chess. The snag is that it would not be politically acceptable. Even if other countries would agree to it, the Soviet chess federation would not have anything to do with any tendency towards decentralization or devolution. I wonder if there is any chance of *glasnost* changing this attitude. Imagine an Olympiad in which Kasparov was playing for Azerbaijan, Vaganian for Armenia, Tal for Latvia!

Problem

This time a game position, rather than a composition. How should White continue?

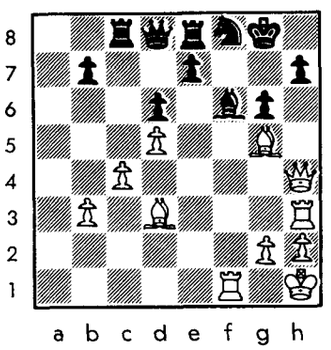

Diagram error

You may have had difficulty in mating in 2 last week in the absence of the Black K. It should have been on d5. I shall be giving the Lloyds Bank qualifying position again before the closing date of 1 July. Sorry!

George Botterill

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This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please.)

☐ Hard up staff in Inland Revenue offices are 'moonlighting' with private cleaning contractors used in their own departments, their union claimed yesterday. — *Daily Telegraph* (James Scott)

☐ A turkey which walked into the restaurant of an hotel at King's Lynn, Norfolk was handed over to the RSPCA. Staff decided that the bird, which is believed to have fallen from a delivery lorry passing by, was not oven-ready. — *Daily Telegraph* (R. A. England)

☐ The Islington Crime Survey has been finding out how crime affects people of different political dispositions. Labour supporters are nearly four times more likely to be victims of assault than Tories are. Alliance supporters suffer twice as many attacks as Tories, half as many as Labour supporters. — *Labour Weekly* (John Garrett)

☐ The 44-year-old chairman of the Official Monster Raving Loony Party was elected automatically on to the town council in Ashburton, Devon because there was no other candidate for the seat. Alan, who likes to dress as Boss Hogg from TV's *The Dukes of Hazzard* said: 'When you hear of the EEC feeding butter back to cows you have to ask who are the real loonies.' — *The Star* (George Moor)

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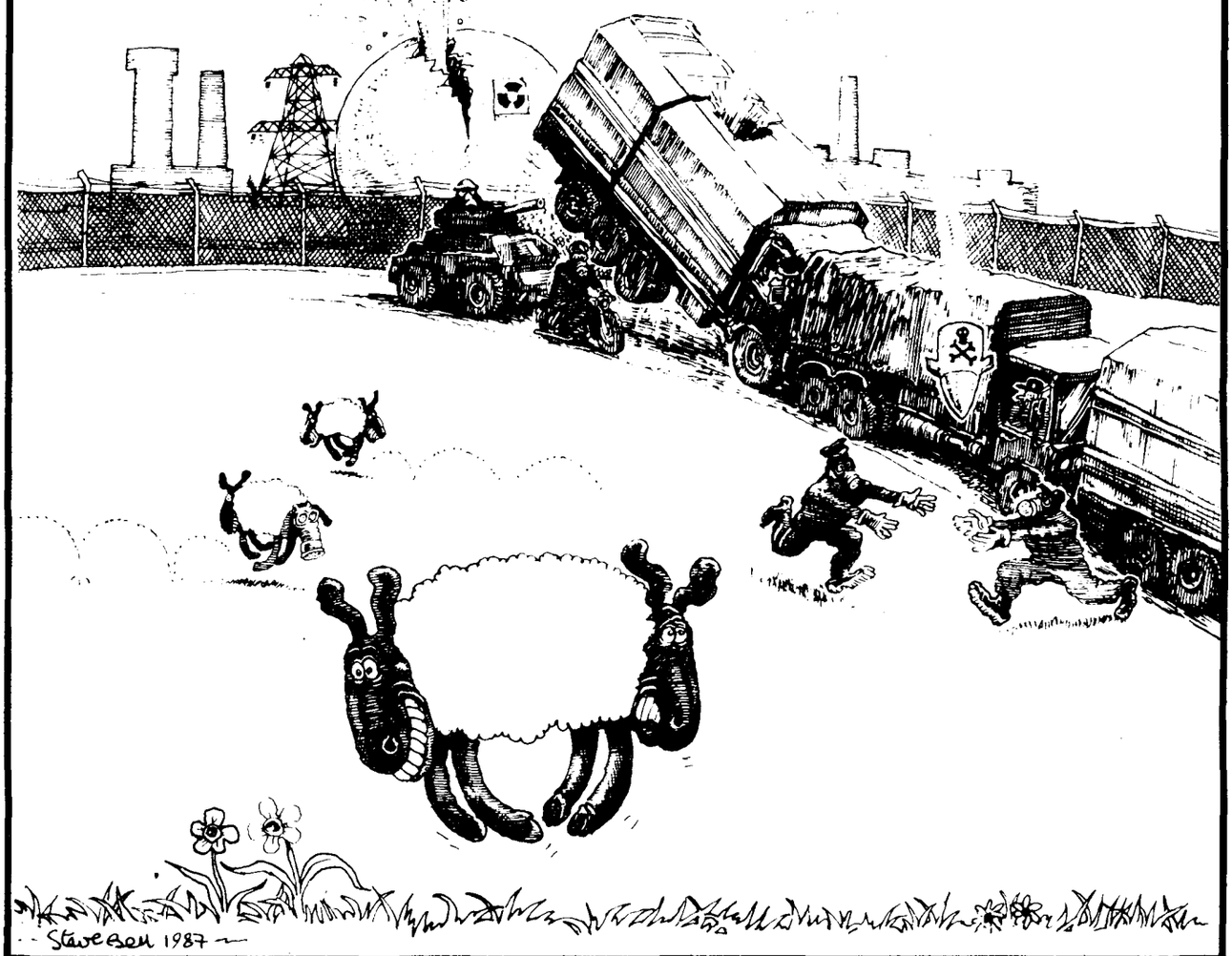
MARCH FOR A NUCLEAR FREE BRITAIN

APRIL 25th



Assemble: 11am Victoria Embankment London WC2.

Rally: 2pm Hyde Park BE THERE.

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For more information, please write to Gillian Marsden, CND, 22-24 Underwood Street, London N1 7JG.

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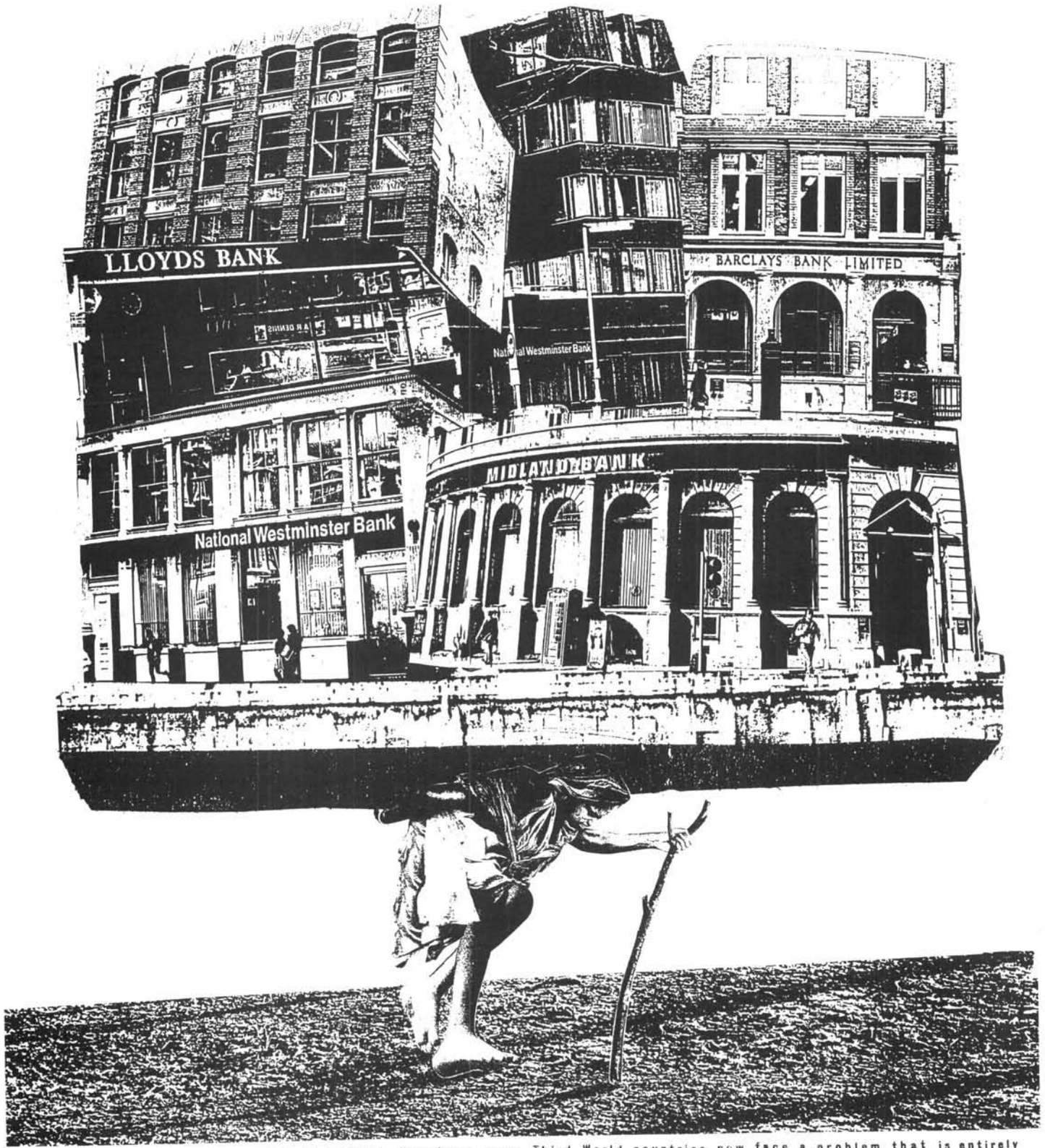
IT'S NOT ONLY DROUGHTS, FLOODS AND DISEASE THAT ARE CRIPPLING THE THIRD WORLD.



After suffering a succession of natural disasters, many Third World countries now face a problem that is entirely man made. Western banks, having encouraged these hard hit nations to take out huge loans, are now demanding massive interest repayments. (Latin America alone has to repay £23,000,000,000 a year). And while the banks grow rich (British banks reported profits of £3,000,000,000 last year) their debtors remain in poverty. If you'd like to see the Third World given a chance to get back on its feet please cut out the coupon. Unlike the banks, we're not asking for money, just your name and address.

Please send this coupon to; WOW FREEPOST, 37-39 Great Guildford Street, London SE1 0EW.

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